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Michel Seuphor

Piet Mondrian

Life and Work

Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York



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Milton S. Fox, Editor

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Piet Mondrian Today

I believe that Michel Seuphor's monograph on Mondrian is appearing at a time which is for various reasons particularly appropriate.

Mondrian's place in the history of twentieth-century art is today definitively established. But opinions are still widely divergent as regards the artistic rank of his work. Indeed, I suspect that a great misunderstanding prevails on this score. Even the question of whether Mondrian today, ten years after his death, is destined to exert a new influence, is answered by some in the affirmative, and by others in the negative, in each case with equal passion. The question is obviously very much in the air.

I

In the 1920s, when Mondrian created his mature works, no one inquired about the sources of his art, or about the stages it had to go through before achieving its "classical" form. His art was there – that was all. By then a diametrically opposed art had happily proclaimed the rebirth of the object; even the Cubists who had once, between 1908 and 1914, initiated the turning away from object to form, now claimed the freedom of working with both. But Mondrian, with vehement resolution, continued his work of reducing the entire visual statement of the picture as well as its spiritual dignity to purely formal elements.

The picture is nothing but proportion and balance – such is Mondrian's message. Proportion and equilibrium of unequally "weighted" planes are treated as problems that require constant re-examination, and that are solved through the vertical displacement of horizontal black bars, and through the horizontal displacement of vertical black bars. These bars are broader than the lines that merely serve to delineate the planes, and narrower than the planes themselves. Of the many possible directions, only the two fundamental ones are retained – the horizontal and the vertical; of the many possible colors, only the three primary ones – blue, yellow, and red; of the many possible degrees of brightness, only the three fundamental values – black, gray, and white. According to Mondrian, the diagonal partakes of the vertical and of the horizontal, just as green partakes of yellow and blue, or purple of red and blue. Similarly, roundness partakes of an indefinite number of directions, just as brown does of an indefinite number of hues. But changes of proportion and equilibrium are effected not only through changes of size and form in the planes of

the picture, but through changes of color and brightness, which increase or decrease the "weights" of these planes. Red has more, blue has less weight than yellow. Yellow is halfway between red and blue, just as gray is halfway between black and white.

Proportion and equilibrium are exclusively sensory, optical qualities. But they are exclusive only in relation to the object – not in relation to the spiritual content of the picture. On the contrary, proportion and equilibrium are just as spiritual, indeed, ethical, as sensory, optical values. Mondrian attached the greatest importance to the spiritual, ethical value of proportion and equilibrium, a value which is concealed behind the sensory, optical appearance; therein lies the secret of the profound influence exerted by Mondrian's formulation in the third decade of our century.

The far-reaching, indeed, revolutionary novelty of Mondrian's art as against almost all previous art consisted in this, that Mondrian for the first time recognized the possibility of balance in *asymmetry*, whereas earlier artists had always thought that balance could be achieved only in a symmetrical arrangement around a central vertical axis. But symmetry means subordination of the sides to the center, domination of the center over the sides. Symmetry is hierarchy. The announcement that an asymmetrical balance was possible seemed at the time a gospel of freedom. Mondrian promised liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters of static, rigid symmetry. Before him, harmony had seemed possible only in symmetrical balance, only in sub-ordination and super-ordination. Mondrian promised, and indeed achieved harmony in asymmetrical balance, in free co-ordination.

II

The rule of symmetry was particularly tyrannical in two domains of visual art – architecture and typography. To be sure, asymmetrical tendencies have time and again asserted themselves in architecture – for instance, in the Rococo and in the *art nouveau* style. In typography too, Futurism and Dadaism had a few years before Mondrian swept aside the sacrosanct rules of typesetting. All this, however, amounted merely to an attempted emancipation from rigid ancient laws – it did not mark the emergence of a new law. But Mondrian meant *both* freedom and law!

Mondrian's influence on the architecture and typography of the 1920s cannot be overestimated – even though we must not forget that the dynamic "diagonal typography" introduced by the Russians (Malevich, Lissitsky, Kandinsky, etc.) was not less important than Mondrian's static "block typography." And whereas the Russians predominantly determined the "elementary forms" of mechanical apparatus (for instance, lighting

appliances), the Dutch artists grouped around Mondrian determined the "elementary forms" of non-mechanical structures, such as houses or furniture. Not only the groundplan of the house, but also the layout of rooms and the design of interior walls – everything was reshaped in terms of Mondrian's asymmetrical free proportions.

Then it came about, also for the first time, that a felicitous parallel for Western building construction and housing was found in the Japanese dwelling. The latter is characterized by simplicity, rectilinear design and transparency of structure, nobility of proportions and natural asymmetrical groundplan and layout. Furthermore, the Japanese house embodies all the human values that were ultimately involved – elimination of violence and turgid eloquence, cheerfulness, frankness, light, and cleanliness.

Mondrian, whose work expressed all the ideas that at the time were expected to heal a world badly shaken by the war, who justified them in his theories, and who embodied them in his personal life, was worshiped like a saint by the young generation of the 1920s. I remember with what feeling of reverence I entered his studio in Paris. Even those who did not share our faith were compelled to recognize Mondrian's unique style-creating powers in all so-called "applied arts."

III

At this point, however, there arises the misunderstanding about the spiritual stature of Mondrian's art. For many persons believe that the significance of Mondrian is confined to his influence outside so-called "fine art" and that his paintings have not the dignity of independent works of art, but are so to speak merely formal experiments with a view to possible applications in so-called "utilitarian art." In other words, they do not contest Mondrian's extra-artistic influence, but deny that his paintings are really works of art.

We shall grant that Mondrian himself fostered this misunderstanding by his theories, in which he envisaged the absorption of pure art by applied art, the elimination of the opposition between art and life, and the permeation of all life, individual as well as social, by the spirit of Neo-Plasticism. But even if Mondrian the theorist were right, as against Mondrian the artist, we would have to observe that he never held the view that the work of art should sink to the level of an object of everyday use; on the contrary, he thought that the object of everyday use should be raised to the level of the work of art.

Mondrian's art, however, refutes Mondrian's theories. His pictures are far more than merely formal experiments – they are as great a

spiritual achievement as any work of pure art. A Mondrian painting hung in a house and room designed entirely in the spirit of Mondrian, indeed, precisely in such a house and room, has a fundamentally different quality and higher stature than any object of material use. It is a most sublime expression of a spiritual idea or attitude, an embodiment of balance between discipline and freedom, an embodiment of elementary oppositions in equilibrium; and these oppositions are no less spiritual than physical. The spiritual energy that Mondrian invested in his art will radiate, both spiritually and sensually, from each of his paintings for all time to come.

The fact that Mondrian's art belongs to an order fundamentally different from that of building construction and furniture-making became apparent in the 1930s, when the discussions about the "new" construction and housing had gradually abated, and when retrograde tendencies asserted themselves even among former partisans of the new currents. Mondrian went out of fashion in building construction, furniture-making, and typography. As for painting, Mondrian's minor followers went astray: only the few genuinely convinced ones remained faithful to his spirit. But Mondrian's art, cleansed of the misunderstanding that had been possible before, now stood before us more radiant than ever!

Another contradiction between Mondrian's theories and artistic practice was most clearly revealed in the exhibition "Genuine or False," which W. Sandberg gave in Amsterdam in 1952. It was and still is objected to Mondrian's painting that, because it repudiates all personal idiom and aims at technical precision, his pictures lack the most crucial characteristic of the work of art – inimitable uniqueness. Hence it was claimed that nothing was easier than to imitate or even fake a Mondrian. That is why Sandberg had ordered a fake Mondrian for his show. The result of the experiment was highly instructive: it proved very difficult to fake a Mondrian. A comparison between original and imitation disclosed that Mondrian's pictures were by no means, as had perhaps been expected, anemic embodiments of purely intellectual inventions. Their sensuous matter proved on the contrary amazingly dense, and their idiom, despite the artist's renunciation of any vainglorious attempt to stress his individuality, highly personal. Those who have understood, for example, how two black bars intersect in a Mondrian painting or how the many-layered color areas taper off at the right angles, know what an eminently craftsmanlike, individual, visual energy characterizes Mondrian's works. And yet the same Mondrian theoretically repudiated the idea that a work of art must be unique and inimitable, on the ground that such an idea is unethical and anti-social, and postulated the reproducibility of the work of art. Selfless devotion to the objective laws governing the composition was for Mondrian everything; the personal idiom was for him at most a by-product.

Thus we may say that Mondrian's pictures are pure works of art not only from the spiritual, but also from the sensory point of view.

IV

This however tells us only that Mondrian's pictures are entitled to the spiritual rank of pure works of art; it does not tell us what rank Mondrian occupies among the painters of our century. Since this is admittedly a matter of opinion, I shall venture to give my own which I expressed as early as 1940. That year, speaking at the Paul Klee commemoration in Bern on July 5, I said: "Among the greatest contemporary artists, the Spaniard Picasso is the most tremendous vital force, the Dutchman Piet Mondrian the most fundamental constructive force, and the German Paul Klee the profoundest explorer of reality." This was my view way back in the 1920s and still is today.

V

After the second world war, whose end Mondrian did not live to see, the commemorative exhibitions in New York (1945), Amsterdam (1946), and Basel (1947) made it possible to view the entire body of Mondrian's work, including pictures dating from before 1920. The exhibitions revealed the splendidly gradual development of the classical Mondrian, which up until then had been known only to a few friends in Holland. The stages of this development are retraced in this book for the first time. Thanks to it the origins and the evolution of his art are now fully illuminated. Particularly interesting is the account of how Mondrian in 1912 encountered Analytic Cubism (1909-11) in Paris, how he moved on to Synthetic Cubism in 1913, and how, year after year he progressed with truly breath-taking consistency beyond Cubism – whose testamentary executor he was in the truest sense!

Then, posthumously, after the second world war, a remarkable development took place. The Basel commemorative show of 1947 had been only a *succès d'estime*, such as is enjoyed by any well-established historical figure; but the very comprehensive exhibitions at The Hague and Zurich in 1955 produced a deep impression not only on the older generation which had been active in the 1920s but, surprisingly, also on the young generation, which responded with particular enthusiasm.

In the course of the last five years we have witnessed two developments in the realm of art, both of which seem to point to a true Mondrian renaissance. One involves architecture, the other painting.

In the field of architecture, that which was called "modern building construction" in the 1920s is distinctly coming back to life. The depression of the 1930s led to a return to handicraft methods of construction. It was thought that unemployment could be mastered by prohibiting the use of machines. Standardized prefabricated elements – one of the most important goals of construction in the 1920s – no longer meant anything. Steel and iron were needed for the guns, and concrete for the bunkers of the second world war. The ideological accompaniment was provided without cost: steel and concrete were denounced as inhuman. Bronze chandeliers were replaced with wrought-iron ones which were propagandized as more "native"; but a few years later, when iron became a rare commodity, the fashion of wooden chandeliers was launched. Large windows were declared to be cheerless, and small windows, like those of prisons, to be particularly cheerful. Also in the field of furniture-making a return to old artisan forms was preached; lathes were provided with the wood, but unlike the ideology, they had to be paid for, and thus remained inaccessible to small furniture dealers, the very men most susceptible to the new gospel. In each country a pseudo-peasant, "native" style was propagated in the name of national self-preservation, and the followers of modern building construction and modern housing were suspected of being unpatriotic. Typography too was ordered to stand at attention, i.e., to go back to rigid symmetrical forms.

The post-war boom, however, touched off by the need to produce houses and consumer goods for people that had long been deprived of them, revived all the building problems of the 1920s. Construction processes had to be mechanized to an extent far greater than had been the case in the 1920s, and even in Europe the cities were compelled to expand upward. But skyscrapers are unthinkable without steel and reinforced concrete, and without a great deal of glass for uncluttered façades. This meant definitive abandonment of the conception of the building as a free-stone structure with a rigidly symmetrical arrangement of façades and a lid on top, as it had been dreamt of once more by the twentieth-century dictators. The aesthetic aspect of construction has once again become exclusively a problem of proportions of building cubes and of elements of the outer walls, such as intervals between supports, height of floors, articulation of windows, height of parapets. Who can fail to hear in all this the voice of Mondrian? Who can at this point fail to remember Mondrian's

last works in New York, which celebrate the nocturnal poetry of the light-dotted skyscrapers around Central Park? And who can fail now to heed the lesson of the Japanese dwelling? The publication, in recent years, of many books on the Japanese dwelling is no accident. Mondrian's sense of proportion is literally the aesthetic yardstick for all the structures produced by the building boom of the fifties – office buildings, schools, factories, blocks of apartment houses, one-family houses, week-end houses. Unfortunately the majority of these structures show all too clearly that all too many architects had worshiped other gods between 1930 and 1945, and that they have not yet been able to equal Mondrian's sense of proportion. But the ideas, and by the same token the style of housing of the younger generation, seem to be resolutely turning away from both the maudlin, pseudo-artisan, "native" style, and the manufactured gentility of the last thinned-down version of the historical styles. The impulse given in the 1920s is everywhere recognized as valid and is carried forward.

VII

In the field of painting, the situation since the end of the second world war has been far less clear. We may roughly speak of four competing tendencies.

There is, first, so-called "socialist realism," which looks like the exact replica of the "art" exhibited in the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* in Munich. Both are based on the fatal confusion arising from the various senses of the term "realism"; both would be more aptly characterized as "idealistic naturalism." What appears in the West under the banner of socialist realism would have to castigate itself for the worst formalism if it had been brought before the bar of Eastern self-criticism.

Where the object is still seriously intended as the vehicle of a realistic spiritual expression (e.g., in Picasso), we have the second tendency of contemporary art, Surrealism – a reflection of the needs, fears, and contradictions of our age, which is surely not lacking in these things.

But nonobjective art, which in the last ten years has spread like an oil stain over all the oceans, is essentially divided into opposed camps (with countless transitional forms and cross connections) – the subjective and the objective, the artists who rely on the unconscious and stress personal idiom, and the artists who strive to be conscious and stress craftsmanship. Here the terms "conscious" and "unconscious" must be taken in a relative sense. Even the most radical abstract expressionist (or *tachiste*) can exclude consciousness only by an act of conscious volition, and his work will always be "directed" accident at least in so

far as it reveals a personal idiom. On the other hand, even the most radical constructivist cannot – and should not – escape his unconscious impulses. Those who see in Mondrian only the part of consciousness, can experience at most only half of his art.

But abstract expressionism which, judging by the number of its followers is probably the most widespread international language today, seems to have already accomplished its liberating task in a world of increasing sclerosis of reason. The proof has been given that accident (from outside) and the unconscious (from inside) have the most powerful share in determining the course of life, as well as the birth of a work of art. The pendulum seems once again to have gone back as far as it can in one direction, and to be standing still before starting another swing.

And this moment seems to spell once again the hour of Mondrian – even though we must keep in mind that the pendulum of history can never return to the same spot, because it moves not only in space but also in time.

Georg Schmidt

Life and Work

In the spring of 1941 Mondrian wrote a short autobiographical essay, which was later published under the title, *Toward a True Vision of Reality*. The pages reproduced here are taken from the preliminary draft. They provide an excellent specimen of the artist's handwriting.

Born in Holland 1872, at Amersfoort, I early did painting, conducted by my father (amateur) and my uncle (painter) and became diplomed for school and high-school ^{drawing} teaching. Then I came to Amsterdam Art Academy and worked there three years. Afterwards I continued to be realist. I preferred to paint landscapes, houses, etc. by gray dawn, by weather or by very strong sunlight when the atmosphere⁽¹⁾ by its density the particularities of things and the great lines accentuate them selves. I sketched by moonlight - cows lying down or staying invariable on Dutch flat meadows. I hated particular movement of people in action etc. I did like to paint flowers, not ensembles but one flower ~~at once~~ as picture. But I was pushed by my environment to paint also things in ordinary vision, to make even portraits with likeness - so I made a lot of bad works. However, by doing also houses with their dead windows then. But not as romanticist: I saw with realistic eyes.

13

perfect beauty of reality — and of man.
 I felt to this reality must be established
truly, plastically, this means like it is,
 thus without — as far as possible — veiling
 by subjective feelings and conceptions
 which it evokes. But it took long before I
 experienced that it is the particular form and
 natural color that evokes, or subjectivity.
 We have not to express ^{the} things but pure
reality. The things are changeable in constant
 reality. Reduction of natural form and co-
 lor to the elements of form and primary color
 is necessary. ~~The~~ Not to ~~create~~ ^{establish} new forms and
 colors, but just to be more able. to abolish
~~them, to create~~ ^{creation} and in this way more unity.
 Can, in Plastic Art, reality only be expressed by
 equilibrium of dynamic movement of form
 and color, pure means can do this in the stron-
 gest way. Can, in Plastic Art, this movement
 only be established by contrasts (oppositions)
 of the expressive means, relationships then
 becomes ^{the} principal ~~of~~ ^{occupation} of the artist.
 The only constant relationship is the right
 angle. By the proportions of dimension the
 constant must be brought to movement:
 made living.



nature nature shows is also limitation ⁵
two opposit~~ions~~ forces which I had expressed
by verticals and horizontals existent and
dominant all. Their reciprocal action con-
stitute "life". I felt that the equilibrium of
an certain natural aspect depends of the equi-
valence of these oppositions. I felt the tragic
created by their unequivalence. I saw tragic
seeing a wide horizon or a Cathedral (high).
At other point I became conscious of: reality
is form and space. Nature shows forms in space.
There is difference between form and space. ~~But~~
~~all is space. Form is in space.~~ Really,
all is space: form as well as that what she
sees as empty space. To create unity, Art has
to follow not nature's aspect but what nature
really is. Appearing in oppositions, nature is
unity: form is limited space, concreted by
only by its determinations. Art has to deter-
mine space as well as form, then create
the equivalence of these two factors.

All this I realized during my work.
In my pictures space was still as a "Back-
ground". First I began to determine forms:
crosses became rectangles. First I made
compositions of rectangles in not quite pure
L and through

quence grown out of all art, mo-
dern and old. It is open to every-
body: therefore a collect it an "ism".

In Paris I developped my work, exhibited
there and abroad (in Europe and America) until
1838 when I came in London. Here I con-
tinued and stayed until this war brought
me (Oct. 40) in New-York. Continuing
also here, I am leaving more and more
the compositions of rectangular planes
and use colored lines to the same per-
pose.

April 41 - ——— Piet Mondrian.

Supplement pag. 10.



Piet Mondrian (1929)



Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan: The Artist's Father
Der Vater des Künstlers – Le père de l'artiste (c. 1870)



Johanna Christina Mondriaan: The Artist's Mother
Die Mutter des Künstlers – La mère de l'artiste (c. 1870)



Piet Mondrian (1899)



Piet Mondrian, his sister and his brothers – Piet Mondrian, seine Schwester und Brüder
Piet Mondrian, sa sœur et ses frères (1890)



Piet Mondrian (1908)



Mondrian in his Amsterdam Studio – Mondrian in seinem Amsterdamer Atelier
Mondrian dans son atelier à Amsterdam (c. 1905)



Piet Mondrian (1911)



Mme. Elout-Drabbe: Mondrian 1915



In the Paris Studio – Im Pariser Atelier
Dans l'atelier à Paris (c. 1926)



The Paris Studio – Das Pariser Atelier – L'atelier à Paris (1926)



Mondrian, Enrico Prampolini, Michel Seuphor (1926)



Mondrian – Willi Baumeister (1926)



Mondrian among his friends – Mondrian unter seinen Freunden
Mondrian parmi ses amis (Paris, 1927)



Mondrian and friends – Mondrian und Freunde – Mondrian dans un groupe d'amis (1929)



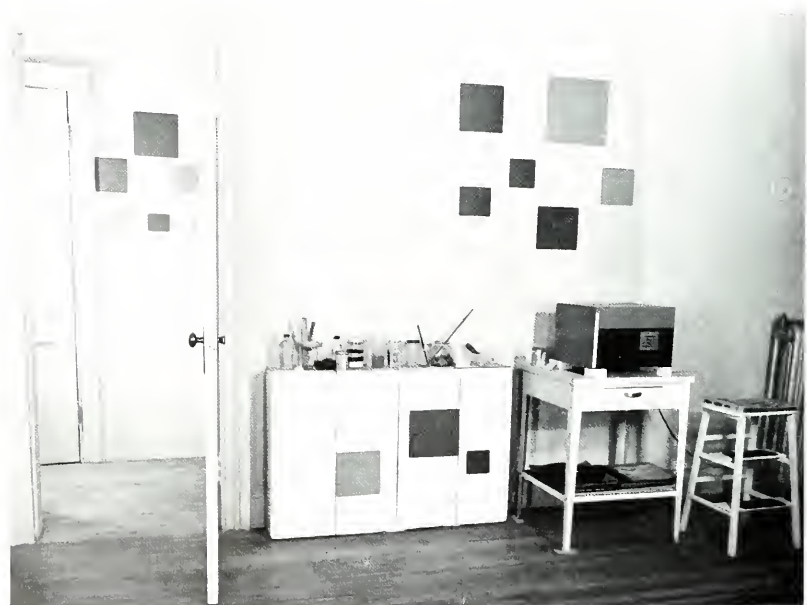
Mondrian and members of the "Cercle et Carré" Group – Mondrian und Mitglieder von «Cercle et Carré»
Mondrian et quelques membres du groupe «Cercle et Carré» (1930)



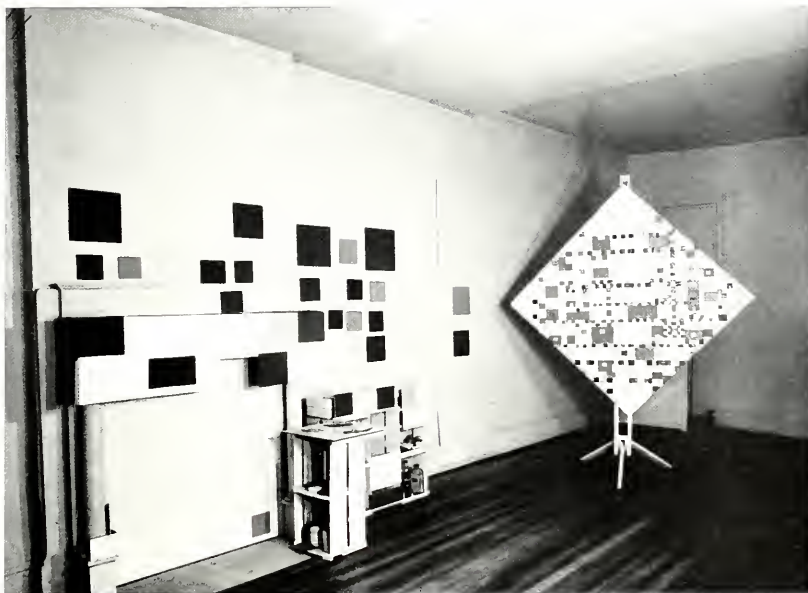
Piet Mondrian (1937)



Mondrian's last studio in New York – Mondrians letztes Atelier in New York
Le dernier atelier de Mondrian à New York (photo 1944)



Last studio in New York – Letztes Atelier in New York – Le dernier atelier à New York (photo 1944)



The "Victory Boogie-Woogie" in the New York Studio
 Der «Victory Boogie-Woogie» im New Yorker Atelier
 Le «Victory Boogie-Woogie» dans l'atelier à New York (photo 1944)



East 61th Street, New York: Mondrian's last domicile – Die letzte Wohnung Mondrians
 Le dernier domicile de Mondrian



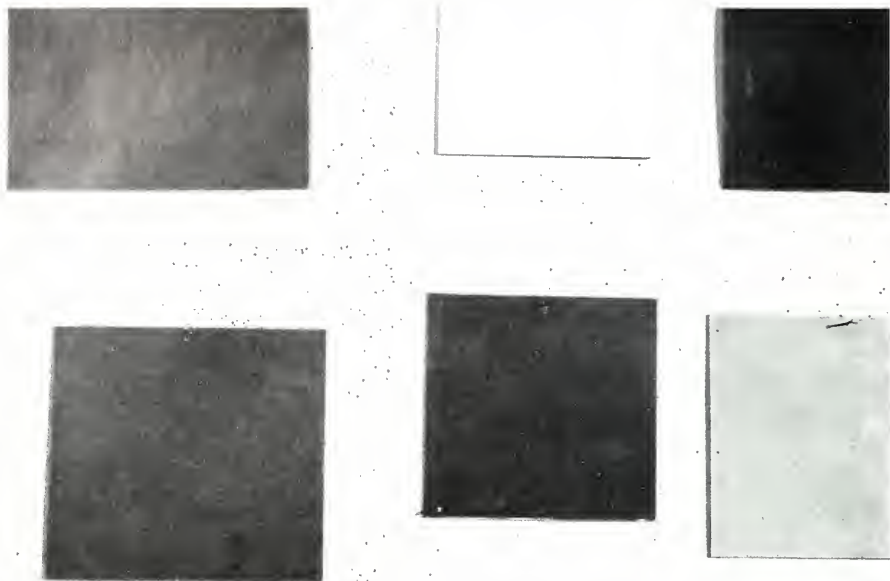
In the New York Studio – Im New Yorker Atelier – Dans l'atelier à New York (photo 1944)



In the New York Studio – Im New Yorker Atelier
Dans l'atelier à New York (photo 1944)



Piet Mondrian (1944)



Detail of a wall in the New York Studio – Detail einer Zimmerwand im New Yorker Atelier
 Détail d'un mur de l'atelier à New York (c. 1943)



Mondrian's grave at Cypress Hill Cemetery – Mondrians Grab – La tombe de Mondrian

Introduction

Centuries, like days, come and go, and each is different from the others. Our century, coming right after that of romanticism and of naturalism, of Delacroix and the Impressionists, is the century of economics and of technology. And it, too, needed a painter to grasp and represent its essence in an image, one capable of infusing this image with spirituality, of expressing the particular genius of the time in universal terms.

This task seems to have fallen to Piet Mondrian. We shall try to show how he acquitted himself at it; the future will have to judge whether he was successful and whether he deserves a place in history with the very greatest. The man, in any case, was equal to his task: he had exceptional moral strength. He was magnificently endowed with patience, tenacity, and a rare gift for speculation; he was clearly marked for extraordinary, even superhuman, enterprises. He left indelible memories in everyone who knew him. And this was not due to his eccentricity or brilliant talk, but on the contrary, to his simplicity, his calm detachment from worldly things, and the very great inner strength which shone through his modesty.

The slow and progressive evolution of his work has made of Mondrian's life an example unique in the art of this century. At the age of seventy-two, he left an unfinished masterpiece, *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. But behind it were twenty years of study, of research, of trial and error in the naturalism which preceded his abstract art; and then, once he discovered its most solid, most fundamental "law" (the right angle in its vertical position), there followed thirty more years of unshakable fidelity to the principle set forth. All this was needed to prepare for the painting which is at once the apotheosis of his work and the emergence of a kind of new promised land of art.

Victory Boogie-Woogie p.191

Even the pattern of his geographical course is significant: he left Holland, one of the first countries in the world to achieve democratic freedom, and lived out his life in New York (once named New Amsterdam) after a long stay in Paris. Mondrian followed the path of the sun and, if you will, of civilization.

Needless to say, this book is not intended to be the definitive work on Mondrian. Even less is it to be an exhaustive critical study of Neo-Plasticism. It is meant as a kind of panorama of a life and work which will still cause much ink to flow, and provoke many an intellectual dispute. My particular hope is that the youth of the painter, spent in Holland, will one day be the object of much more thorough studies than the one I am capable

of making today. It deserves no less. But it is a task full of difficulties. Four trips to Holland, with the single aim (and I know the Dutch language) of questioning the still living contemporaries of Mondrian, have not resolved all of the questions I wanted to ask, and on certain points my knowledge is still obscure. The memory of persons advanced in years is not always exact, and sometimes their testimony is contradictory. Some are guided by feeling. Others are hesitant and miserly with information. A great deal remains vague; the best thing to do is to give credence only to unexceptionable documents. Mondrian himself, towards the end of his life, did not always remember things correctly. Many errors are perpetuated and new ones committed as a result of journalistic haste. We have to make the best of the tangled thicket of information collected bit by bit; above all, we have to be cool-headed, and make unsparing use of logic. Others will study all this in detail; they will be able to devote years to it after the whole body of Mondrian's correspondence has come to light and all of his works have been catalogued. This book, written with devotion, will provide a few landmarks which I hope will endure.

I

Holland is the youngest of all the countries which possess an old culture. Everything there seems new, everything is freshly washed and newly painted. Very old little towns, which played an important role in the wars of independence of the sixteenth century, give the impression of having been constructed all at once, some thirty years ago. Geologically, too, this earth is the newest in Europe: three quarters of it was wrested from the sea, and its conquest continues each day, ever more boldly. One can cross the whole center of Holland, from Dordrecht to Den Helder, passing the three biggest cities, without ever reaching a point above sea level. A country inhabited by more than ten million people, it is a land of pastures, uniformly level, dotted with black and white cattle, lined with big canals and little ditches full of water, streaked with reflected lights and red stains: its cities and villages are constructed entirely of brick.

It was in the heart of these red spots, the spot which is, actually, the heart of the country, its exact geographical center, at Amersfoort, that Piet Mondrian was born on March 7, 1872.

Amersfoort is a small town, not far from Utrecht, midway between the North Sea and the German frontier. The Queen's residence is a stone's throw away, at Soestdijk, a large villa rather than a palace, unpretentiously situated almost at the road's edge.

The house where Mondrian was born stands in the oldest part of Amersfoort on the Korte Gracht (short canal), one of those intimate spots found all over Holland which move us with their dignified simplicity and modest proportions. Still water between very straight walls, a long quay with red buildings that seem like doll houses. Quay and homes are made of the same brick. On the little canal, a youngster propels with a single oar a large gray boat laden with fruit baskets. There is no one else on the scene, no other movement than the rippling water. No sound, except, if one listens attentively, the hum of a machine behind the white façade (the only one not in raw brick), with a very brilliant copper plate announcing that Messrs. F. and K. Zwart are manufacturers of labels. Suddenly the carillon—for in Holland there is always a singing tower somewhere—breaks this repose with lyric notes, and announces gaily that the sun is shining high up above the clouds. For I forgot to mention that the rain is gently falling.

Family Background

The Mondriaans (this is the right spelling of the name) are a modest but very old family, originally from The Hague. It has been established by careful research in the registry of the Town Hall that a

certain Christian Dirkzoon Monderyan lived in The Hague as early as 1670. He was often called, says the chronicle, Munterjan, which means "merry John". He had two sons, Adam and Willem. From the latter son born in The Hague in 1677, Pieter Cornelis, more simply Piet Mondrian, is descended.

His grandfather, born in The Hague in 1809, was first a wig-maker and then a barber. He had four sons, the eldest of whom was Pieter Cornelis, father of Mondrian, who was born in The Hague on June 18, 1839. His future wife, who was to be the mother of Piet, was Johanna Christina Kok. She, too, was born in The Hague, on June 16, 1839, just two days before her husband.

Piet's father chose teaching as his career. At the age of thirty he set himself up at Amersfoort, on the Korte Gracht, next to the school (which seems to have been the house where now labels are made); he was already head teacher (in Dutch: *Hoofdonderwijzer*).

Only Piet's childhood was spent in this place. He was eight years old when the whole family, which now included three boys and a girl, left for Winterswijk, a large settlement in the fields, at the extreme eastern tip of the country, right at the German frontier. Here another brother, Carel Mondrian, was born. It is to this brother, the last survivor of the family, now in retirement at Breda, that I owe many precious details about the youth of Piet and about their childhood, spent in Winterswijk.

The father was a strict Calvinist. Not particularly narrow-minded, he was yet not inclined to take moral questions lightly, or to compromise his paternal authority. He was the intimate friend of Abraham Kuiper, the famous Dutch theologian and politician, a Christian Democrat if there ever was one, and an ardent defender of traditional Calvinism.

It seems that Piet had much affection for his mother. But we know very little about her (we usually know very little about the mother of a family). In a portrait done of her when she was twenty-nine she appears stiff, strained, almost sorrowful. The picture was made at the very moment of her marriage – a happy marriage! – to the teacher.

Piet's father was an excellent draftsman. The drawings that he did at Winterswijk, in his school, for Christmas and Easter decorations, were much admired. On the blackboard he drew Biblical scenes: the Christmas cradle, Simon in the Temple with the Prophetess Anne, the Flight into Egypt, Jesus and the Wise Men.

Carel, to whom I owe these details, also draws and paints. The miniatures he showed me – animals, a dog or a cat on a wicker chair, painted with great precision – are not without quality. On Sunday trips to the country he, at times, took a turn at painting the same subject as his brother Piet. But his work as a civil servant left him too little time to devote himself seriously to art.

Whence came that general bent for painting and drawing in the family? Perhaps from Piet's uncle, the teacher's brother, Fritz Mondriaan, who was a professional painter. Born at The Hague, in 1853, Fritz had been the pupil of Willem Maris, the most representative of the three Maris brothers, famous in the annals of Dutch painting. He was well thought of, in his time, as a painter of landscapes and interiors. The Rudolf Museum in Prague has an *Idyll in the Woods* by him. Fritz lived at The Hague, but liked to paint, during the summer, at his brother's place in Winterswijk. It was he who gave Piet his first painting lessons, including instructions on how to compose a landscape.

This learned uncle, however, was not of much help in the years that followed. Much later, in 1909, when the painting of his nephew began to create a bit of a stir in Amsterdam, Fritz Mondriaan made it clear to the public, by a note in the newspaper, that his own work had nothing in common with that of Piet Mondrian.

However that may be, while he was very young – he himself says at about fourteen – he was possessed by the idea of painting. But his father was apparently determined that he should be a school teacher. Piet, still too young to assert himself, worked hard for many years to win the diploma of a teacher of drawing. A first diploma (for teaching in the elementary schools) was awarded him in 1889. Carel Mondriaan clearly recalls his brother's diligent application: "The former playroom was transformed into a studio," he relates, "and Piet studied at home. I can still see him come in carrying an enormous arm of 'Moses,' or other things in plaster, a head of 'Laocoon,' for instance, which he would borrow from school to make charcoal drawings of. From books he studied perspective, the structure of flowers, plants, and anatomy. Nor did he neglect the history of art. For this was necessary to pass the examination. Sometimes papa would pose a kitchen chair with a pail and a broom, so that Piet could draw that, too. But neither papa nor uncle Fritz could teach him what he had to know to pass the examination; he did it all on his own."

Three years later, in 1892, he obtained another diploma for the post of drawing teacher in secondary schools. One day he went with these certificates to a tiny town in answer to a call for a schoolmaster. But when he saw from afar the dark building in which he would have to teach, the candidate became frightened, turned around and fled.

Mondrian kept his two Dutch diplomas to the end of his life. I saw them in New York at Harry Holtzman's, yellow with age and carefully folded, and I took care to transcribe the dates. Mondrian always thought that under certain circumstances it might be useful to prove that he also knew how to draw academically.

Before obtaining his second diploma, he had taught drawing at a school in Winterswijk. But the young Mondrian felt no call for the career of a teacher. He wanted to be a painter, an artist. Of course, this could only involve him in painful skirmishes with his father. But the boy would not give in, and eventually had his way. Toward the end of his life, Mondrian gave the American journalist Jay Bradley the following details: "When it became clear that I wanted to devote my life to art, my father tried to discourage me. He lacked the money to pay for my studies and he wanted me to get a job. But I clung to my art ambitions, and that was my father's sorrow. Another man paid for my studies for three years."

Studies at Academy

All difficulties overcome, Mondrian left Winterswijk in November, 1892, to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam.

Cows by Water p. 209

He had painted many landscapes in the neighborhood of Winterswijk, more or less inspired, no doubt, by the summer activity of his uncle Fritz. In the Slijper collection there is a charming little landscape with cows, done at the age of seventeen or eighteen. But for the Academy, the bucolic ideal was hardly the thing. The living model was of the highest importance: a soldier posed on horseback in the closed courtyard of the Academy!

Still Life with Fish p. 210

Piet seems to have preferred still lifes. In a private collection in Amsterdam, there is a *Still Life with Fish*, which has all the traits of an academic work of that period. It is signed with a flourish, P. C. Mondriaan, and dated January, 1893.

Henceforward Piet lived in Amsterdam, and his family saw him only during his vacations. As was inevitable, he saw his uncle during the summer. But above all, he knew the pleasure of again being with his youngest brother Carel, with whom he often made bicycle trips to the German frontier, only some ten kilometers away. "There," said Carel, "we drank heavy beer and ate sour milk in big bowls set on a table around an enormous tree."

Carel also recalls that his brother had an almost maniacal fear of injuring his eyes. At the slightest danger he would close his eyes or cover them with his hands, turning his head away. This fear seemed absurd to the other members of the family; they often joked about it. "But Piet," said Carel, "was in all respects a sober young man, who took just enough time to come and have coffee with us, and then would disappear again into his studio."

Sometimes at Winterswijk he would go on a much longer trip to the village of Doetinchem, some thirty-five kilometers in the direction of Arnhem, where a very old painter, a man of noble birth, Braet van Uberfeldt – he was born in 1807 – shared his house with his sister and a goat. This painter showed great interest in Piet's work, and seems to have

greatly encouraged him. Apparently all that remains of Van Uberfeldt's work is fifty-six colored plates which he did in collaboration with Valentin Bing for an album devoted to regional Dutch costumes, published in Amsterdam in 1849. The hobby of his old age was to cut out reproductions of works of art from all sorts of illustrated newspapers and to keep them meticulously classified in folders. Piet rarely returned to Winterswijk without carrying under his arms some of these folders. "They amused us no end," said Carel, "during the long winter evenings."

Once in Amsterdam, Piet worked with passionate zeal in order to become a true "artist," and this, step by step, following the most normal, most straightforward course. For three years he attended the classes at the Academy – "with much application and very good results," says the record – and then for two years more he attended evening classes. He was soon making copies in the museums, for rich collectors. He had to do this to make ends meet (as late as 1915 on a visit to Amsterdam, he made a copy at the Rijksmuseum of *The Hunt* of Beeldemaker, a painter of the seventeenth century, as a commission for a German business man who was fond of this type of painting).

That is the kind of work any penniless young artist might have to do. When not harnessed to such tasks, Piet liked to paint outdoors, on the bank of the Amstel, or of the Vecht (a stream which flows into IJsselmeer, several kilometers from Amsterdam), or even close to the Gein, a tiny tributary of the Vecht. All these streams calmly wind across very green polders, speckled in summer with white and black cattle.

There exist some academic landscapes of large dimensions which Piet did in this period. Most often they are composed of a cluster of trees and a quiet stream in which the trees are reflected with rather obvious light effects. Apparently they were painted indoors, perhaps meant as decorations, or to please some teacher; we do know that Mondrian had much respect for the painter August Allebé, then director of the Academy.

But a subject had already appeared which he was to repeat, a theme which would continue to concern him, and which is a clue to his real personality. The famous farm of Duivendrecht, which he painted in so many styles and at so many different times – almost always from the same viewpoint – served him as a model since his days at the Academy.

Duivendrecht is a village in the loamy, damp farmlands close to Amsterdam. Mondrian, who had boarded for some time with the bookseller Worms, in the Kalverstraat, then lived with his brothers at Watergraafsmeer, a suburb of Amsterdam, very close to Duivendrecht. At No. 128 on the Ringdijk, they had rented the upper story (*bovenhuis*) of one of those typical Dutch houses which are composed of two double

C. C.35–53

Landscape near Amsterdam p.49

Landscape p.212

Landscape near Oele p.212

Farm near Duivendrecht

p.213 and C. C.114–122

stories. Piet had his studio at the very top, and his two brothers – Carel, who later became a civil servant, and Louis, who was a teacher – lived on the floor below. They took their meals together, and got along wonderfully. But Piet seems to have had a marked preference for Carel, eight years his junior. It happens in many families that the eldest son, by a sort of precocious paternity, will become particularly attached to the youngest. “I was well liked by Piet,” Carel told me. “He found Louis less disposed to philosophizing. We were both taken up in those days, Piet and I, with the study of theosophy. Piet would have liked me to study music seriously. No one could get him to give up the idea that one day I would play at public concerts. But the truth is that I did not have enough talent for music. I was much more interested in horses: and I would have liked to go along with our older brother Willem who left, at seventeen, for the West Indies, as a private secretary to the Governor General, and who later set himself up at Transvaal as a horse trader.”

Mondrian spoke to me of this brother in the Transvaal whom he, too, seems to have admired. Willem saw action in the Boer War and was imprisoned for three years in St. Helena. When he married, around 1910, Mondrian sent him as a wedding present a dozen plates on which he had painted, before firing, landscapes of Holland.

After the Academy and the evening classes, Mondrian left the Ringdijk and went to live close to the Rijksmuseum, at No. 5 Stadhouderskade, where he remained for only a year. From there he went to No. 158 Albert Cuypstraat, where he lived for more than four years, from December, 1898, to May, 1903. Despite these changes of quarters he continued to take his meals with his brothers, who remained in the same suburb at Watergraafsmeer, on the quay opposite a canal – where there was no lack of pictorial subject matter. It was here, or close by, that he painted, in addition to the Duivendrecht farm, numerous barges, Dutch boats, and views of polders, or even simple sheets of water, with or without fog.

Favorite Subjects

Cows Grazing p.217

C. C.85–87

Landscapes pp.214, 215

He always preferred simple subjects: a field with cows, a boat, the corner of a farmyard, the outline of a mill, a lone house in the fields, a group of trees, a green stretch of pasture. We have only a single landscape of Amsterdam done by Mondrian. The picturesqueness of Amsterdam, which has inspired so many other painters, seems not to have attracted him at all. On the other hand, certain subjects in the countryside nearby seemed inexhaustible to him, and he returned to these countless times

Landscape near Amsterdam – Landschaft bei Amsterdam ►
Paysage près d'Amsterdam (c.1902)



with an ever renewed and ever powerful interest. He behaved as if he hoped to wrest from the object, through patient exploration, some secret substance, an intimation of the absolute, which he sensed in all things, and especially in the humblest, the most common. Much later, he discovered that this secret, this divine absolute, lies in us, and that it is we ourselves who for the most part project it into things. He would then be led to discard progressively the natural aspect of things, and strive to paint the divine in itself, the absolute as such, even as he found it within him, without reference to any external object. But then another problem came up: the problem of a new plastic language, appropriate for the expression of this absolute, and yet intelligible to any person not devoid of sensibility.

We are not there yet; far from it! Our painter is just trying his first steps and his life is not an easy one. "At twenty-two began a very difficult time for me," Mondrian wrote. "To make a living I did many kinds of work – bacteriological drawings for textbooks and schoolrooms, portraits, copies of pictures in museums. And I taught as well. Then I began to sell landscapes. It was a hard struggle, but I managed to make a living and was glad to earn just enough to be able to do what I wanted to do."

In his drawing class there were several ladies. One, a certain Miss Crab, herself an English teacher in Amsterdam, invited him for a stay in Cornwall, England. She was a great sportswoman, who liked to pose on horseback. As for Piet, he had not the slightest interest in sports. Was it then out of bravado, or to increase his self-confidence, that one day he leaped into the sea from a high rock? He swam well enough to get back to shore, safely, but the feat brought on an attack of pneumonia, and he was in a quite serious condition when he returned to Amsterdam. With the care of his two brothers, he just pulled through. His father, alarmed, brought him back to Winterswijk. There he got well, but slowly.

At about nineteen, Mondrian, before going to the Academy of Amsterdam, thought of entering the clergy. For a short time he hesitated between art and religion. This seems to have been perfectly normal for him. Slow moving and very sensitive, Mondrian was far more subject than his brothers to the influence of the family atmosphere. In a snapshot of him at eighteen, with a sister and three brothers, he appears not quite formed, with round cheeks, still adolescent; but the expression in his eyes is strikingly profound. Nine years later, in a snapshot made in 1899, the transformation is complete: with mustache and goatee, and hair blown over his brows, he appears as a man who has taken up his role in life, and not without passion. The snapshot of 1908 – another nine years have gone by – shows a man at the height of his vigor and who can control his inspiration, with a full beard, a proud bearing, a reflective glance. At thirty-six he is master of the world, and master of even more than that: of his own universe, which transcends the world, which adds something new to all that has existed; and he has the indomitable energy to change the world.

Crises of Growth

Not so easily, of course, and quite differently from the way he might have hoped. First he had to go through illness, and crises of growth; he had to go through the big and little trials of apprenticeship, he had to cope time and again with obstacles arising from his own nature as well as from the external world. And still, no one changes the world: it changes of its own accord, and rather by virtue of its own imminent laws, than by the will – the ill-will – of its inhabitants.

Change the world! But no one can force evolution to quicken its pace. To run ahead is to take the risk of arriving too soon, and of having to wait all alone in the desert for the main part of the caravan. Will it come? Perhaps not. Sometimes it never comes; it does not go by the spot one would have sworn it was bound to pass. For the future is the unforeseen, it always transcends what we know.

Change the world indeed! The future is *another* world; but what we want to change is *this* world.

Of course, in a certain sense, this world of here and now will be present in the other world of the future. Art alone can give our present world the title of nobility that will ensure for it a lasting place in the flow of time. This is why the highest task in the hierarchy of human values is that of projecting the image of the century in the changing mirror of art. A flattering image, without a doubt, for the century wants to be content

with itself, wants an image showing it at its best. In a way the image is a transfiguration of the century, to be passed on to other centuries. Such a transfiguration of the century into its most flattering, but also its purest and loftiest image, was precisely Mondrian's aim, once the crises of his growth were over.

These crises were primarily religious in character. Both the conventional Calvinism of his home, and his personal bent for reflection and speculation account for this.

However this may be, it seems that at the age of twenty-seven Mondrian was still not completely emancipated from his father's influence. At that time he saw much of a certain Albert van den Briel, who, nine years his junior, was still a student. This was in 1899. According to Van den Briel's account, Mondrian had just emerged from a very difficult period: he had fallen prey to all sorts of doubts and disillusionments. The question of theosophy was much debated by the two friends through the whole winter of 1899-1900. Mondrian read books which bore directly or indirectly on the subject. He was particularly enthusiastic about *The Great Initiates*, by Edouard Schuré (the first edition of this work is dated 1889). Many years later, he continued to speak of this book to his friends. He even referred to it in a letter he sent me in 1934.

In 1901 his circumstances improved somewhat. Having sold two still lifes and done a portrait to order, he found that he could afford to go to Spain with the painter Simon Maris, who was his friend. But the trip was a disappointment. Mondrian, who feverishly sought the path proper to him, could paint nothing at all in Spain (we do not know of a single painting or drawing done on this trip). The light was too different from that of Holland. He found the bullfights a sorry spectacle, the people not engaging. Soon, with most of the funds for the trip unspent, he came back to his native land, from which he still had much to receive before he could become the least national painter of the century.

In August, 1903, he went with Van den Briel to the Dutch Brabant for the first time. "To knock around," says Van den Briel. The rough peasants, the old farms, the whole atmosphere of this province made a deep impression on him. At once he was seized by a desire to live there, and to share his life with those men of simple customs. As soon as he got back to Amsterdam, he made preparations to leave for the Brabant for good. But first he had to collect some money, and sell some of his belongings (some copperware, a Persian rug) and a few paintings. He was not able to leave until January, 1904. He went to Uden, a tiny village some twenty kilometers east of Bois-le-Duc (in Dutch, 'sHertogenbosch), more exactly: world's end. "It was then," says Van den Briel, "that one saw Piet in the act of transforming himself. I had work to do on the land, but I

always came back to Uden for the weekend, and I would bring provisions: the bread made by the peasants, which Piet was very fond of, ham, etc. We spent a good deal of our time among the peasants, chatting and playing cards. They knew only our first names. This period had a great influence on Piet. It was here, at Uden, that the real Mondrian was born. I have in mind mainly his behavior towards others. A human contact as close as the one which linked him to these almost primitive beings, whose character was so open, and who were deeply religious, would have been impossible in the city. At least that is what Piet thought. The crust around the inner man is so thick there, he used to say. When finally he had too many visits from Amsterdam – people who came just to pass the time, and who prevented him from working – he left the place. His direct relations with people who were not artists were never again to be as they were in Brabant. I recollect that in Paris he continually changed his baker and grocer, in order to remain a stranger in the places where he shopped. But in an inner sense, and among his friends, Piet always remained the man he became during his days at Brabant.”

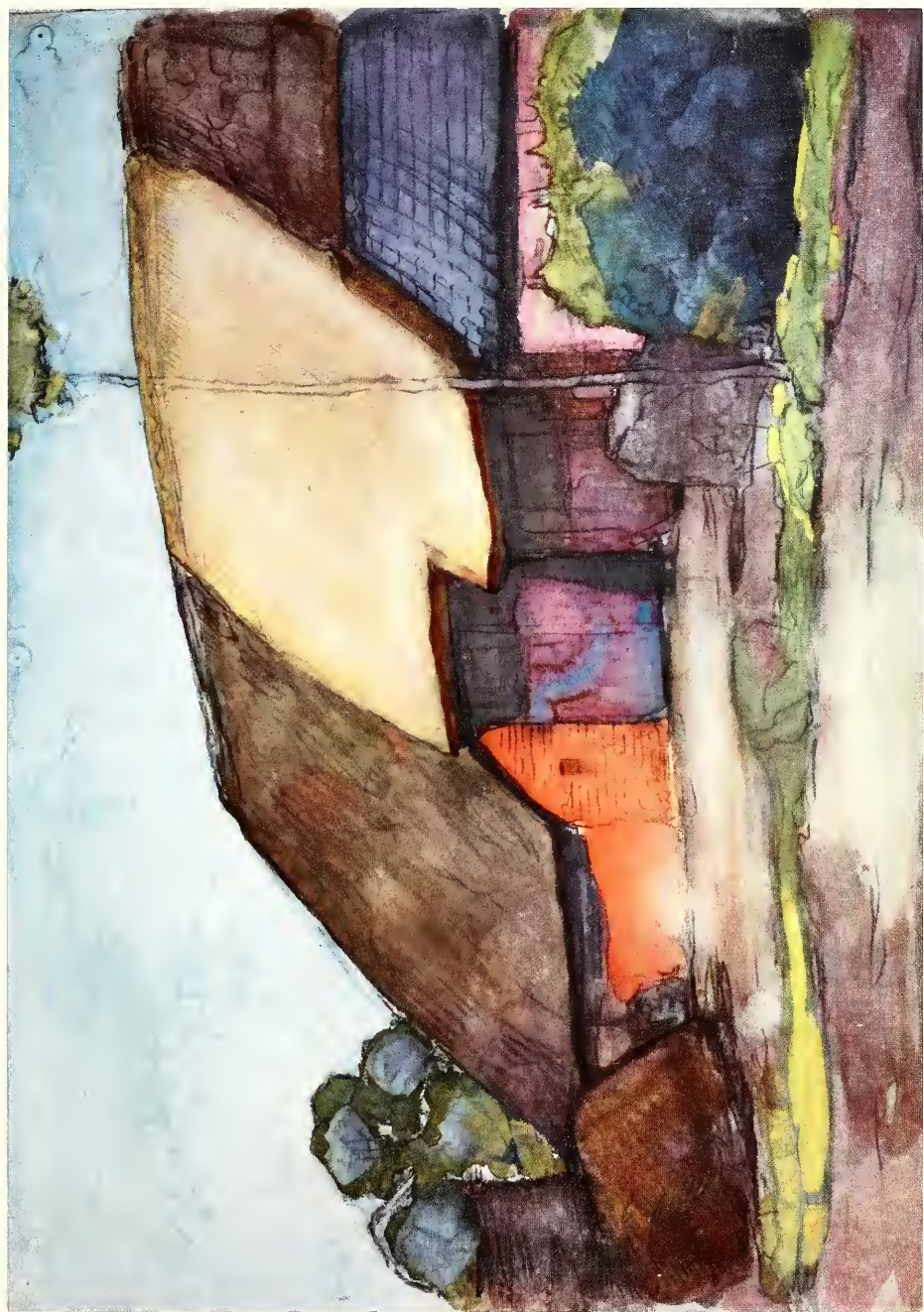
The two friends had long conversations on religious questions. The population of Brabant was deeply Catholic: the Mass, the sacraments, the dogmas, the symbolism, all raised completely new questions for the young Protestant. In the end, his sympathy for the people of Brabant was not decisive; it was in theosophy that he found liberation from his native Calvinism, and a widening of his intellectual horizon. The Theosophist Society was then growing rapidly in Holland. Just before the first world war it probably had more than 100,000 members.

Mondrian had a very lofty notion of the theosophical ideas; at the same time he was much disturbed by the snobbery already manifest in the movement. He could not endure the bigotry of some women and young girls, who, in Amsterdam, never failed to appear at the then frequent meetings, and whose turn of mind was sometimes very superficial. They were obviously not much interested in ideas, and Calvinism was still strong in Mondrian; he was hostile to external forms, and to any kind of ostentation.

Theosophy

His investigation of theosophy was long and meticulous. I am not sure that it was completed. It is true that, after his return to Paris in 1919, he almost never discussed this subject, not even with his nearest friends. An extreme sensitivity made him reticent about things likely to be misunderstood or badly interpreted. On one occasion only (I do not recollect when), he spoke to me of his former relations with the Theosophical

Farmyard at Nistelrode – Bauernhof in Nistelrode ►
Ferme à Nistelrode (c.1904)



Society of Holland; but it was as if these matters belonged entirely to the past. One other time, however, in 1930, after a brief exchange of ideas (neither of us was very talkative), he gave me a book to read. It was *Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld* ("A New Picture of the World"), by the Dutch theosophist, Schoenmaekers. When I wanted to return the book to him a few days later, he told me to keep it, that he owned another copy. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that Mondrian was not a book lover; he didn't even have the beginnings of a library in his studio. In his single closet he kept only a few pamphlets and old notebooks with drawings or notes, and issues of *De Stijl* to which he had contributed, lying in a pile with the linen and laundry. It was his custom to destroy the letters he received; and he got rid of books and documents. These things easily overwhelm you, he said, they take up too much space and threaten to clutter up the mind, which should not be distracted from its sole need, art, the new work to be created. Whenever I brought him one of my books, he always asked me as a favor, excusing himself with many polite circumlocutions, not to write any dedication in it. He wanted, after having read it, to be able to give it to someone else, for whom it might have value. "It is better for it to circulate," he would say. In this spirit he made a present of my essay on El Greco to his Dutch friend Slijper, in whose house I found it again twenty years later. It did not seem to matter to Mondrian that I had sketched a brief parallel in this essay between him and El Greco. There is good reason to attach significance to his having preserved two copies of Schoenmaekers' book; one of these was found after his death among the very few printed things which he had kept. The two other publications were also theosophical works in Dutch, both issued before 1914. One is a speech by Rudolph Steiner, the other, a little work by Krishnamurti.

Notes 1 and 2

The intense theosophical phase seems to have lasted from 1899 to 1916 or 1917. It is said that a portrait of Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, hung on the wall of Mondrian's studio in Laren, in 1916. Between 1899 and 1917, there had of course been periods when the painter's work took precedence over his metaphysical preoccupations. However, these always remained latent. Mondrian's cast of mind made everything serious, every problem profound. Though he had debated questions of theosophy with Van den Briel as early as 1899, it was not until 1909 that he actually became a member of the Dutch Theosophical Society. Considering the length of time it had been reflected on, no one can say that that step was lightly taken. The document which Mondrian kept throughout his life says solemnly: "Today, on May 25, 1909, Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan became a member of the Theosophical Society in the seventh month of the thirty-fourth year of its existence. Entered in Amsterdam, No. 1,690." The paper, yellowed by

time, bears the signature of Mrs. Annie Besant. Mondrian was then thirty-seven years old.

For added information I wrote to the Theosophical Society of Holland. This is their reply: "Piet Mondrian was in fact a member of the Theosophical Society, and for quite some time. We cannot say exactly for how long a time, because most of our papers were lost during the last war. The file on Mondrian, like many others, could not be found. But he always remained faithful. We cannot, alas, say more than that."

The unfolding of Mondrian's religious thought can thus be summed up as follows: his Calvinism was replaced by theosophy, then theosophy itself was absorbed (after 1916) by Neo-Plasticism, which for him was to be capable of expressing *everything* without words.

For him, religion finds a final refuge in art, which, freed of its inessentials, and become *purely plastic*, or pure image of the absolute, is identical with religion. But this religion thrives in great centers of urban culture, and develops with the spirit of the times. So the thing to do is not to meditate on man's nature in some calm retreat; on the contrary, one must settle in a bustling metropolis, and foster the concept of a *pure plastic art* in keeping with the highest goals of man.

Mondrian did not wish to escape from or to alienate society. He was not like Plato's sage in the *Republic*, who advises flight as a means of salvation. Society, for Mondrian, is not rotten; all human potentialities must be realized within society and with its help. He never withdrew from society, and he piously observed every little obligation of a modern citizen. At this point any religion, whether Calvinist or theosophist, seems absent from his thinking; his entire metaphysics is resolved in his Neo-Plastic art, which changes like life, but always in accordance with great fundamental laws. Religion, in an essential meaning, is immanent in man's perpetual advance.

Mondrian's Religion

Must we assume, then, that Mondrian became the adversary of religion in the usual sense of the word? Certain facts, among which I include the preservation until death of the previously mentioned two little books, suggest that such an assumption would be wrong.

In 1934 (I lived in southern France then and tried, like the Greeks, to exist on figs), he wrote me: "It is in my work that I am something, but compared to the Great Initiates, for instance, I am nothing." In the same letter he told me to think of him as "simply a poor man who values life and tries to embellish it." These remarks scarcely need comment.



Toward the end of his life, reading in some text the opinion that all religions are dead, he wrote in pencil on the margin: "But so many people are still helped by them." Finally, when someone in New York spoke to him of an old friend of his who had turned Catholic, he quickly cut short any possibility of criticism or irony by saying: "But in what a nice way!"

Mondrian's character was complex and indicated many contradictions, but one of his predominant traits was certainly an inclination toward universal and transcendental problems. Another characteristic he shared with truly religious men was his total disinterestedness, and a calm faith in his destiny. I am inclined to think that his deeper self remained mystical throughout. An excessive reticence, typically Calvinist, could not quite hide his innermost sentiments. Each gesture expressed the inner man, each word he spoke placed him in the non-temporal, the most trivial everyday tasks acquired in him a moral, almost sacred quality. Few failed to respond to the very special atmosphere in his studio, an atmosphere due mainly to the presence of the man himself, to his simplicity, his cordiality, his rejection of anything vulgar or violent. Towards the end of his life, this spiritual glow still struck people who met him for the first time. The day she made his acquaintance, Charmion von Wiegand noted in her journal: "Mondrian is a slight, thin man, half bald, with the sharp ascetic features of a Catholic priest or a scientist."

Until the time when he laid the foundation of an art which was like a religion to him, Mondrian groped in the dark. He painted mauve forest landscapes in the Brabant, and moist fields under the low skies around Amsterdam. His treatment was rough, deliberate, without impasto, but with a very ample touch. The color is often dull, and shows a search for hidden harmonies rather than brilliant contrasts. The light is diffuse. Sometimes he painted by moonlight (the *Mill*, in the Municipal Museum at The Hague), at other times in the mist, when objects lost their details and became silhouettes, more grandiose and more simplified. Three years before his death, in 1941, in an autobiographical essay, *Toward the True Vision of Reality*, he recalls this period:

"I often sketched by moonlight – cows resting or standing immovable on flat Dutch meadows, or houses with dead, blank windows. I never painted these things romantically; but from the very beginning I was always a realist.

"Even at this time, I disliked particular movement, such as people in action. I enjoyed painting flowers, not bouquets, but a single flower at a time . . . My environment conditioned me to paint objects of ordinary vision; even at times to make portraits with likeness. For this reason, much of this early work has no permanent value. At the time I was earning my living by teaching and commercial drawing.

Woods p. 224

C. C. 104, 110

pp. 68, 77–79, 243

C. C. 128–165



Map of Holland showing the places where Mondrian lived and painted

"After several years, my work unconsciously began to deviate more and more from the natural aspects of reality . . . I knew little of the modern art movement . . . I admired it but I had to seek my true way alone."

Though he did several academic nudes, rather stiffly painted, and a certain number of portraits, Mondrian was not a figure painter. Even so I want to call attention to some heads of children, painted around 1907, which are charming. White flowers fill the lower sections of these paintings; the faces are left blurred, but the eyes, which seem to dream wide open, are painted with great precision, and shine with a vivid light. Mondrian himself would have objected to this statement. This is surely the work of a romantic painter – though Mondrian would have disliked such an opinion. But surely there is no harm in indulging in an occasional poetic flight or even in a bit of magic when one is young.

C. C.12-14

There are several self-portraits of the painter. I know four. The first, probably painted around 1900, shows him full face, with a penetrating glance and a slightly pointed beard. The work is not signed; in the lower left-hand corner is a two-line inscription, lettered in india ink: ALZOO WAAG IK MYN IKHEID TER WERELD TE BRENGEN – EN RUSTIG VERWACHT IK – WANT HET EEUWIG VERJAGENDE NOODLOT DWINGT MYN VERLANGEN TOT ZEKER GEWORDEN. (So I take the risk of thrusting myself into the world – and I wait calmly – for the destiny which eternally pursues us lifts my desire to the point of complete self-confidence.) This inscription, written in poor Dutch and in somewhat inflated style, intrigued me for months. Mr. Van den Briel solved the riddle: he himself had written it on the little canvas five or six years after it was painted. "This is a free translation of a very old Icelandic poem," he says. "The canvas hung in my room, and this sort of poetry was then in vogue. Years later, I realized that it had nothing to do with the personality of Piet, but the thing was done." He even adds: "The text is certainly dramatic and exaggerated. But Piet himself had not gone beyond that stage." The proof of this: Mondrian, who detested this portrait, wanted to riddle it one day with an automatic pistol. Van den Briel's brother, a cadet at a military school, was very fond of practicing pistol fire, and Mondrian enjoyed shooting up with him the portraits that had ceased to please him. The one mentioned here just managed to escape massacre, and then became the property of Van den Briel, which is not to be regretted; just as it is, even with its inscription, it tells us something of the youth of Mondrian. It was a normally ardent youth, with a normal amount of pointless idealism.

Self-Portrait p.221

It was at about the same time, most certainly before 1908, that he stayed with the painter Hulshoff at Oele, a little village near Hengelo,

in the province of Overijssel. The farms there were very old and very poor, the customs and way of life, ancestral. Peasants and cattle sometimes lived in the same room. Mondrian had no taste for the houses with pointed roofs. But he greatly loved the old oak trees of the country, the heather, the sheepfolds. It was probably here that he painted the large canvas of which he speaks in a letter to Slijper, a picture representing "the heather, at the fall of dusk, with a herd of sheep . . . A quite salable canvas," he adds.

I was unable to determine how long he stayed at Oele. Perhaps it was only for the summer months, for he did not give up his studio in Amsterdam. At Oele, he set up a makeshift studio in the local school-teacher's home.



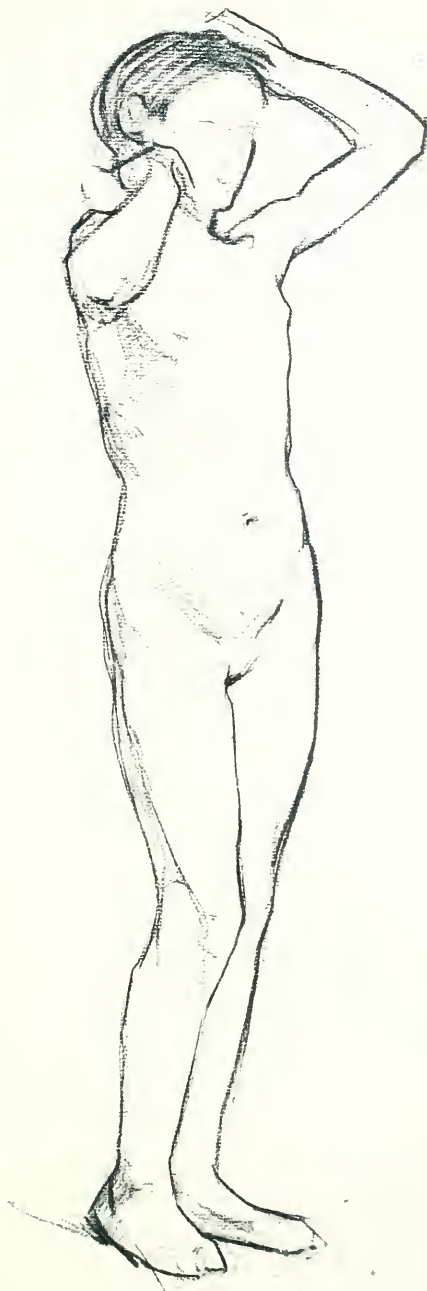
Willows – Weiden – Saules (c. 1902/03)



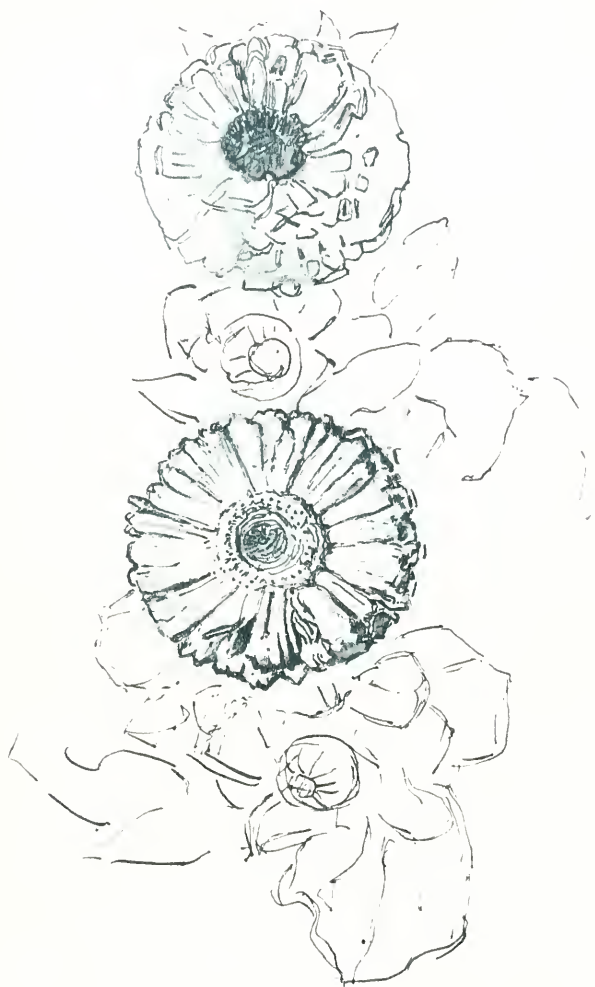
Autumn Landscape – Herbstlandschaft – Paysage d'automne (c.1902/03)



Landscape with Cows Grazing – Landschaft mit Kuhweide
Paysage avec bétail (c.1902/03)



Nude – Akt – Nu (c. 1904)



Two Marigolds - Zwei Ringelblumen - Deux soucis (1907)

Two Marigolds – Zwei Ringelblumen – Deux soucis (1907)

The Netherlands has always been a land of painters. Since the beginning of the Renaissance, painting has been its most active vehicle of culture, in the north as well as in the south. Even its best writers often have the temperament of painters rather than of storytellers. But while in the south, that is, in Flanders, painting is almost always sensual, in the north, in Holland, it tends to intellectualism – an intellectualism that assumes the form of active meditation, as with Rembrandt, or of an art of calculated and subtle music, as with Vermeer. These two famous names should suffice to introduce us to the two currents which for centuries have divided Dutch painting into opposed and competing camps. At the time Mondrian entered the Academy, Rembrandt's successors seemed to be triumphant. Van Gogh was dead, but still unknown. The painter in vogue was George Henri Breitner, brilliant pupil of Josef Israëls. He painted "with powerful, flat brush strokes and slightly mixed colors, after the fashion of Hals and Manet" (André Michel). Breitner influenced Mondrian's entire early work, at least in technique and treatment, for Breitner's favorite subject, Amsterdam in the snow, does not seem to have attracted Mondrian. We have no landscape by him in which there is snow, and only, as I said, a single view of Amsterdam. In any case, his first admiration, by his own avowal, was for Breitner. He then underwent the weaker influence of his teacher, Allebé, and that of the painters of the Barbizon school, whose work he saw at the end of the century in the important collection of Mesdag in The Hague.

George Henri Breitner

Around 1900, a group of stylists appeared, led by Antoon Johannes der Kinden, a painter of large decorative compositions, who later succeeded Allebé as Director of the Academy. The principal representatives of the movement were Jan Terwey and Johan Thorn Prikker, soon joined by Willem Adriaan van Konijnenburg and Jan Toorop, who around 1906 became the center of the group.

The counter-movement had as its principal representatives Kees van Dongen, Jan Sluyters, and Piet Mondrian himself. But Mondrian's Zeeland period is characterized by intensive research in various, and often diametrically opposed directions. So there is nothing surprising in the fact that after coming into contact with Cubism in Paris, he changed camps, and became the most solid representative of the group of stylists. At the crossroads (when in Paris, he dropped the painting of impressions and moved in the direction of the new order which later became Neo-Plasticism) he made a slight change in the spelling of his name. This gives us a chance to divide his work into two parts, roughly illustrated as follows:

Rembrandt	Vermeer
Israëls	Der Kinderen
Breitner	Thorn Prikker
Van Gogh	Toorop
Van Dongen	Van Konijnenburg
Sluyters	Van der Leek
Mondriaan	Mondrian

Thus Mondrian (genius, too, is subject to the common laws of growth) was shaped by his country—all of whose art movements he followed zealously – and also by his time, which was at its most brilliant when he was in Paris, in 1912. He passed through all this slowly, meditating each step taken; and then he was to go much further, and to pass beyond his country and his time. He was *himself* to shape his time – which would become his time. The century would be his century. It would be his lot to bring forth the totally new art: he, the slowest of them all. The real advance was to come from the least careerist of painters; the revolutionary truth was to be revealed by the most peaceful of men. He would die at an old age, and soon his universal significance would appear like a halo around his head. And it is possible that in future centuries no one will be able to speak of our century without evoking Mondrian, just as one cannot say ‘trecento’ without thinking of Giotto, or ‘prehistory’ without thinking of flint.

In Amsterdam, Mondrian exhibited in all the big shows. He began to sell. Nevertheless, he still gave lessons, and one of his pupils was the rich wife of a business man. He accompanied her to Blankenberghe, in Belgium; but he disliked the place, found the lady affected, and was soon back in Holland. This was in 1908.

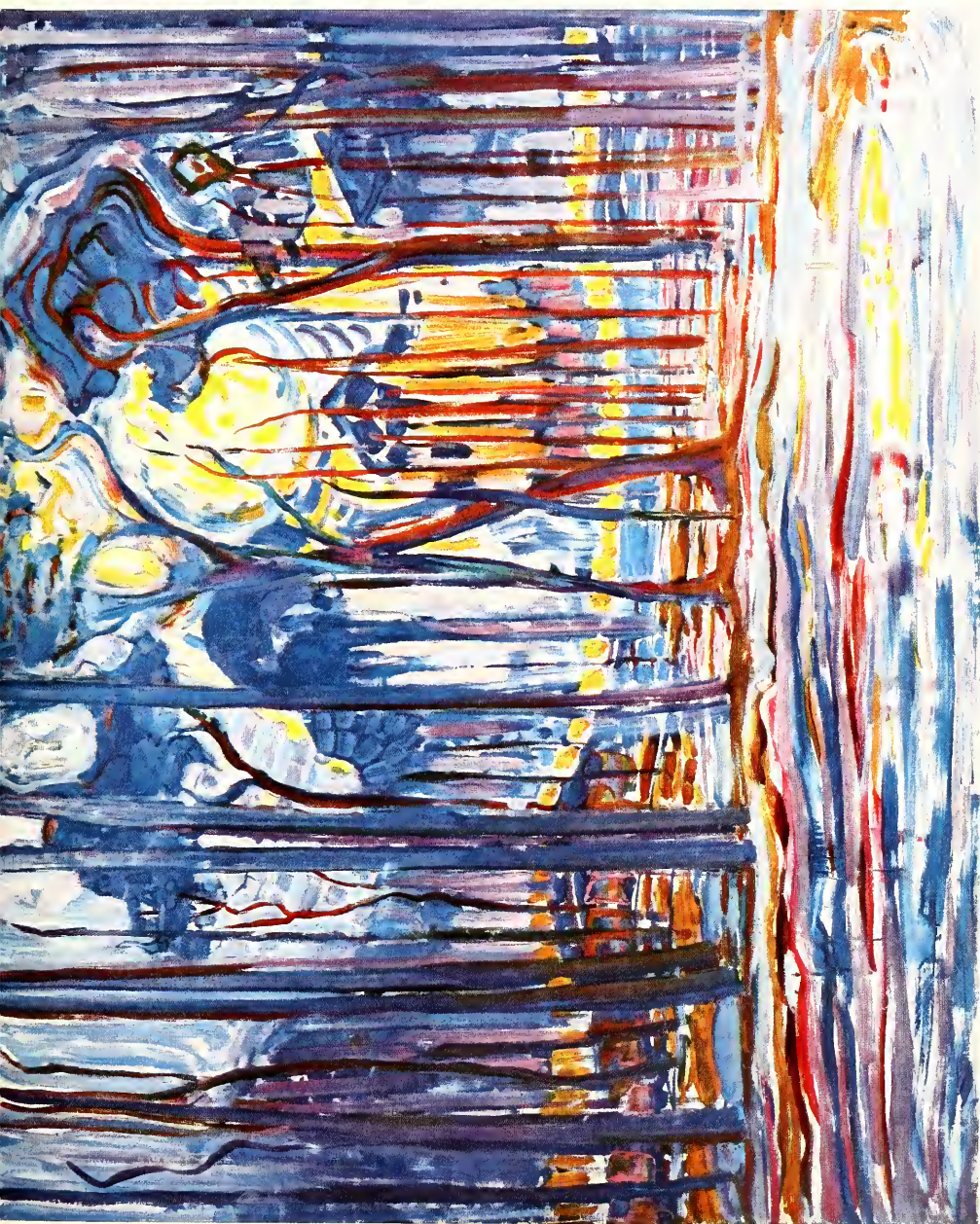
Visit to Zeeland

His first summer stay at Domburg falls in the same year. This village in Zeeland, at the extreme end of the isle of Walcheren, nestling against the high dunes separating it from the North Sea, was destined to play a great role in the painter's life. Mondrian made long summer visits here between 1908 and 1911, and then again after Paris, in 1914 and 1915. These were two periods of transition, of passionate speculation, of calm and exalted research. Domburg left indelible traces – the sea, the dunes, the towers, the “tree” series – in an essential part of his work.

Note 3

“The first thing to change in my painting was the color,” says Mondrian in his autobiographical essay. “I forsook natural color for pure

Woods near Oele – Wald bei Oele – Bois près d'Oele (1907) ►



color. I had come to feel that the colors of nature cannot be reproduced on canvas. Instinctively, I felt that painting had to find a new way to express the beauty of nature."

He was thirty-six – the age at which Van Gogh died. Mondrian was to live on for a long time. But for the moment, he was exactly at the stage in which Van Gogh had left painting.

At Domburg he found a number of painters younger than himself, grouped around Toorop, then fifty years old. Toorop, a Javanese by birth, who had come to Holland as a youth, was at first under the influence of Ensor and Manet. He had studied at the Academy of Brussels, and been in contact with the new Parisian and English schools of painting, which attracted him successively. Then, under the impact of the literary work of Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, he became a Symbolist. Finally, in 1905, he was converted to Catholicism, and from then on his art became fixed in a very linear and narrative style. In his new religion he found mystical subjects which he treated with a subtle Javanese flavor. But it was for the great variety of his technique in the period preceding his conversion, as much as for the mystical content of his art, that he won considerable influence over the young Dutch painters of that time. They venerated him as a master.

It is hard to say how much Mondrian owes him. Incontestably, he was strongly smitten with the charm of the Domburg milieu. His palette suddenly became brighter; like Toorop, like Thorn Prikker before him, he, too, for some time, used the Pointillist method. More passionate than they, he was led by his temperament to go beyond existing techniques. On the whole, he worked in a remarkable number of different techniques throughout his Zeeland period. Some of his canvases, done with just a few strokes, are drenched with sunshine – real baths of light (the sea, the dunes); others are variations on a theme, with very extreme differences in technique and treatment (the Westkapelle lighthouse, the tree pictures); still others are delicate studies by an artist in love with simplicity (the flowers). Theosophy, too, sometimes claimed his interest, influencing him in the direction of Toorop's Symbolist style, and in his great triptych *Evolution*, he went back to the mauve palette of his Brabant period. He was clearly haunted by the idea of a purely spiritual art. But at the same time a powerful love of nature permeated his painting. He worked in two directions (search for pure spirituality, and lyricism of nature) without knowing how to reconcile them; in these two tendencies we have to look for the foundation of the later Mondrian. Metaphysical preoccupations had familiarized him with general ideas, and given him a taste for the absolute, with the disinterestedness in material things which this implies; and he combined a love of nature with playfulness and subtlety.

Jan Toorop

Evolution p.237

I think it right that all art instruction should begin with the study of nature. The artist should be a whole man, and no man is complete without poetic sentiment. It is doubtless latent in all men, but the changing spectacle of nature is most likely to awaken and sharpen it. It is this poetic sentiment which in its turn awakens the artist and spurs him in the pursuit of perfection. Vondel, the great Dutch poet of the seventeenth century, says it very well in a few words: "Nature is the poet's mother, art his educator." And he goes on: "This is why no one can reach perfection without using nature to his advantage, for it is from nature that art acquires its elegance and its life." How right the Dutch poet was! Even today, it is extremely useful for an abstract painter to spend a long and humble apprenticeship in the study of nature.

In considering Mondrian, we should not confine ourselves to his final accomplishment, i. e., Neo-Plasticism; we should keep in mind his whole artistic development, including his gropings, failures, relapses. A true artist never finds his way at once; rather, he has to discover it, to construct it entirely, and to do that he must clear a path for himself in the tangled forest of ideas. A creator of new roads? A woodsman, first of all!

Mondrian and Nature

I know that later on Mondrian's attitude toward nature became very irreverent. He was particularly irritated by trees, by anything green, in fact. I remember that one day, at Albert Gleizes', on the Boulevard Lannes, he asked if he could change places at the table in order not to see the trees of the Bois de Boulogne. Later, after 1934, the same scene was enacted at Kandinsky's in Neuilly, and again at Arp's, in Meudon.

In 1932, on his sixtieth birthday, he received a quasi-official invitation to Holland. But no one could persuade him to leave Paris. When someone asked whether he had feelings of hostility toward his native country, he finally mumbled, like a timid but recalcitrant child, with the perplexed irritation peculiar to him: "All those meadows! Those meadows!" Toward the end of his life, he often said that he preferred New York to Paris, because Paris was still so romantic and had so many trees along its avenues!

It is hard to believe that these remarks came from the same man who in his youth had painted so many landscapes showing great sensitivity to the beauty of nature; I am thinking particularly of his admirable tree series. I don't think there was any element of pose in his disparagement of nature, nor desire to shock (at least, I never knew Mondrian to be like that); I should rather account for it as a defense against

Trees pp.244-246
C. C.169-195

Church Tower at Domburg – Kirchturm in Domburg ►
Tour de l'église à Domburg (c.1909)



an old, but powerful, love. Mondrian understood that a certain dose of fanaticism was necessary to carry through the enterprise he had undertaken – it would, after all, bear his name. His apparent hatred for nature I explain, therefore, as springing from the too powerful tension of a repressed love. It was not the memory of a disappointed love – the lyricism of his earlier work proves this amply – but, on the contrary, the fear of a new charm which might turn him, or at least distract him, from his great task.

During the first year of his Zeeland period (1908), Mondrian went to Domburg with Cornelis Spoor, a painter of still lifes and portraits of children, executed in dark tones. Spoor, more influenced by Allebé than by Breitner, was also an ardent theosophist. They rented two rooms in a farmhouse close to the village, and Jan Toorop often came to see them. A person who remembers those days told me that Toorop would often remain for a long time in silent contemplation of one of Mondrian's canvases, and express his approbation in a monosyllable just before leaving.

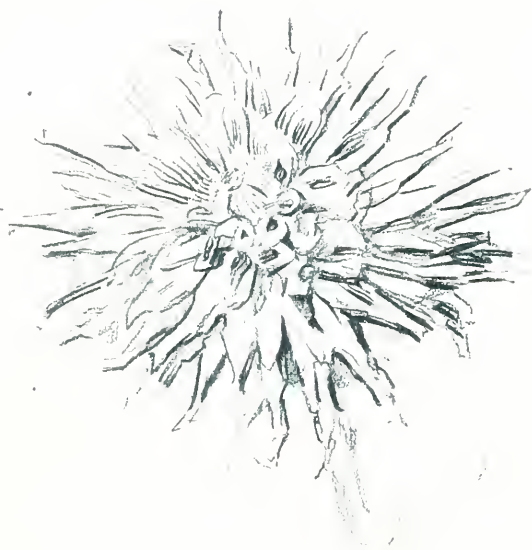
Jan Sluyters

In Amsterdam, Mondrian had another great friend, Jan Sluyters. The two had been associated since the turn of the century, when Sluyters was still at the Academy, where he was to win the Prix de Rome. Sluyters, who had returned enthusiastic from a stay in Paris (1906), was renewing his palette under the influence of Gauguin and Matisse. Mondrian greatly admired the boldness of Sluyters, and for a time was looked upon as his pupil. But, as the critic N. H. Wolf put it, "He was soon to surpass his master."

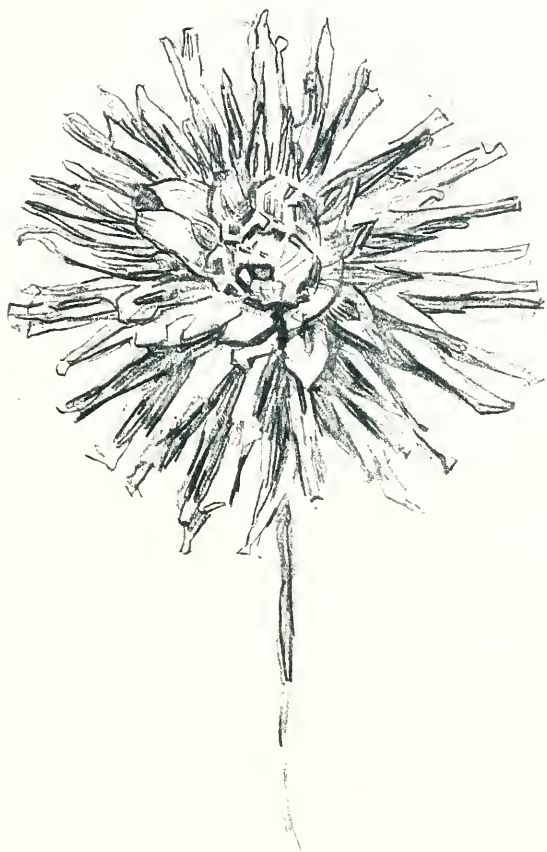
In January, 1909, the triumvirate of Spoor-Sluyters-Mondrian exhibited at the Municipal Museum in Amsterdam. The exhibition had strong repercussions in the Dutch press. Mondrian especially drew the fire of the critics. He showed a series of new canvases in very bright colors, done in Zeeland, and many older ones, done in Brabant. Many of these were large, rough sketches, dabbed on raw, unsized cardboard, large parts of which were left bare.

It is time to say something about the critics. The remarkable fact is that Mondrian had against him all the "top names" – famous and would-be famous writers, well-known journalists, intellectual epicures. The small fry were much more prudent: they said that they did not quite understand him, and they tried to spread what light they could from their modest lanterns, which eventually proved more helpful than the blinding searchlights of the great minds. Listen to Frederik van Eeden, the great Dutch writer: "Mondrian's fall is tragic and terrifying," he said, in a

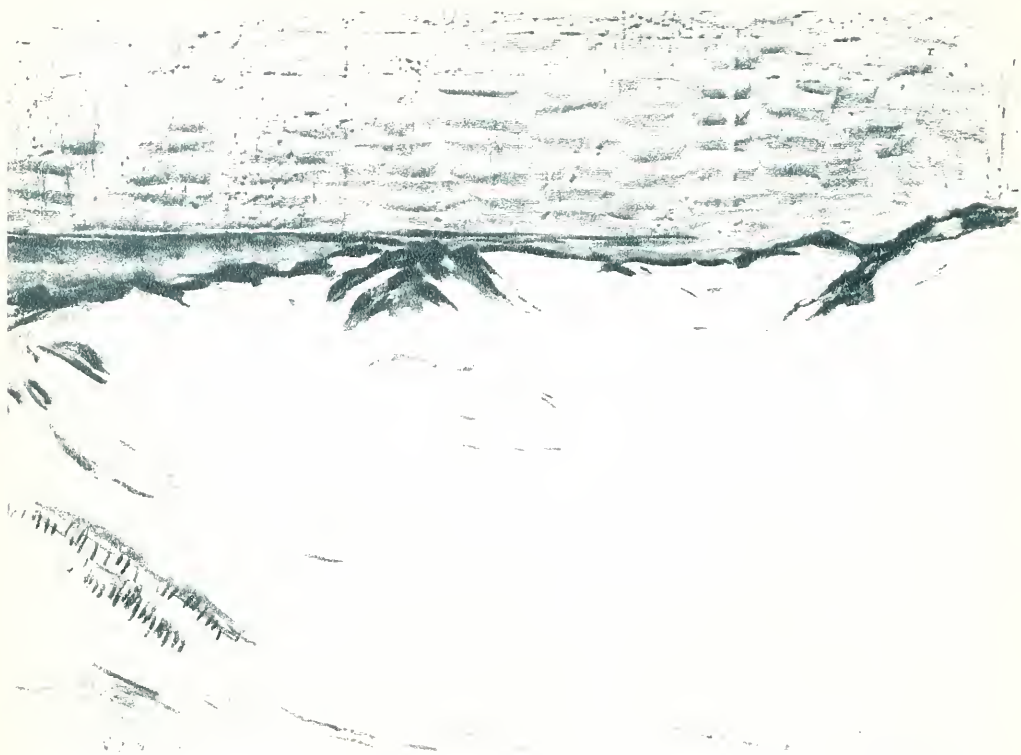




Chrysanthemum – Chrysanthème – Chrysanthème (1908)



Chrysanthemum – Chrysanthème – Chrysanthème (1908)



Dunes – Dunen – Dunes (c. 1909)

magazine article entitled "Health and Decadence in Art." "As his original gifts were of the very highest, so his fall is the hardest. In his early period he treated really magnificent subjects. His vision of nature was grand and noble. His color was often marvelously beautiful. But none of these works is really mature, and among all his powerful sketches and studies there is not a single finished masterpiece. Who has thrown him into this mad confusion? That isn't easy to say. But it was probably Van Gogh. What is certain is that once he threw off all academic constraint, he has lost his balance and has taken to daubing in the most abominable style." Further on, still referring to Mondrian, he speaks of stupidity and insensibility (*botheid en ongevoeligheid*).

Israel Querido, another great Dutch writer, supported Van Eeden's opinion that Mondrian was a sick and degenerate painter. Several years later, Erich Wichman outdid both of them: "Mondrian? A still beautiful corpse," he said. And Just Havelaar, the famous essayist, an intellectual to his fingertips (or perhaps only at his fingertips?) declared that Piet Mondrian "was never anything but a weak painter." (*Het Vaderland*, March 8, 1922.)

In 1910, one year after the exhibition of the triumvirate, Mondrian contributed some important works to the exhibition of the so-called "Luminists," held in the same Municipal Museum in Amsterdam. Again the critics made him their target. Some claimed that he was mad. N. H. Wolf, then a very prominent critic who called himself Mondrian's friend, wrote that this was "the work of a sick, abnormal man," that it was "not even art."

Less important journalists, not great men of letters like the others, did not share this opinion. One of them, who signed H. d. U. and wrote for the Schagen newspaper (Schagen is a tiny town between Alkmaar and the Helder), replied to Mondrian's detractors, and especially to Wolf, in a long article.

"Mondrian," he wrote in this local sheet, "is exhibiting his visionary work. In the art circles of Amsterdam he is the one at whom all the jokes and wisecracks are aimed, the painter at whose name some shrug their shoulders, while others kneel in quasi-adoration." And he went on at length to examine, judge, and explain, for his own satisfaction, a type of painting which was so strange. He did not think, as some did, that it was the work of a drunkard, or of a man who wanted to attract attention to himself at any cost. "No," he said, "such an idea could never be seriously entertained by anyone who knows Mondrian personally. Mr. Wolf claims that his art is the art of a sick man. I happen to have heard a young painter, whom I personally know to be a very serious young man, say that he would like nothing better than to contract that very sickness.

And when I made Mondrian's acquaintance and enjoyed two hours of his silent company, I understood the wish of this young painter." The provincial journalist then went on to compare Mondrian to the prophets of antiquity, to the great idealists of the past, to Rembrandt. "This art," he continued, "is situated outside of, and perhaps above, our capacity for appreciation. It is Mondrian's nature to follow ever upward the road he chose. He would have acted in the same way no matter what road he had taken, that is, if he had been able to take another road: his destiny was to climb. This was written in his nature, once and for all. His work springs from a powerful desire to liberate art from matter as fully as possible. Something which any art aiming at perfection should and does strive for." The journalist concluded by remarking that no critical article, however slyly worded, could ever arrest the forward march of such an artist, because "should everyone in the world curse the sun, it would rise just the same." (*Schager Courant*, May 21, 1910).

Conrad Kickert

Note 4

The most effective supporter of Mondrian at this period seems to have been Conrad Kickert, painter and art critic. Ever since 1907, Kickert, then critic on *De Telegraaf* ("The Telegraph"), had been fighting in Mondrian's behalf. He protested several times against the place allotted Mondrian in exhibitions. His words must have had effect, for in October, 1908 he expressed his joy at finally seeing Mondrian's paintings properly and favorably hung. "I think," he wrote, "that it is not to me he [Mondrian] owes this, but to the vigor of his work, and to the fact that the jury itself is beginning to appreciate it. His *Amstel* is a work of ample construction; its atmosphere is melancholy, a tender violet light filters through the delicate air; once again the structure has fullness. And a major virtue: it is an absolutely independent work, as, by the way, is everything Mondrian does."

Kickert was a resourceful man, rich, and prodigiously active. In 1910 he founded the Circle of Modern Art (*Moderne Kunstkring*), which held annual international art exhibitions in Amsterdam. Mondrian was a member of the managing committee, which included Toorop, Sluyters, and Kickert himself. The first exhibition, held in October, 1911 at the Municipal Museum, in honor of Paul Cézanne, showed 28 of the latter's canvases, as well as works by Braque, Picasso, Derain, Dufy, Redon, Vlaminck, and others. Here are the titles of the paintings Mondrian exhibited: 92, *Flowers*, 93, *Landscape of Dunes*, 94, *Dunes*, 95, *Mill*, 96, *Church*, 97, *Evolution*. In the catalogue his name was spelled with two a's, and his address was given

pp. 75, 95, 235, 237-239

The Red Tree – Der Rote Baum – L'arbre rouge (1909-10) ►



as 42 Sarphatipark (Ceintuurbaan), Amsterdam. The following year (October, 1912), the exhibition was in honor of Gauguin and Le Fauconnier, beside whose works were hung paintings by Archipenko, Braque, Van Dongen, Freundlich, Gleizes, Léger, Marie Laurencin, Metzinger, Picasso. This time Mondrian exhibited the following: 156, *Still Life*, 157, *Trees*, 158, *Flowering Appletree*, 159, *Flowering Trees*, 160, *Seascape*, 161, *On the Dunes*, 162, *Trees*, 163, *Hyacinths*. In the catalogue his name was now spelled with a single *a*, and his address was 26, Rue du Départ, Paris. Between the two exhibitions, Kickert had eagerly helped him to carry out his great plan to go to Paris, and lent Mondrian his Paris studio, near the Gare Montparnasse.

I happen to disagree with Mondrian about the date of his arrival in Paris. At the end of his life he said (in *Toward the True Vision of Reality*) that he came to Paris "around 1910." It seems to me that his memory is off by two years. Elsewhere he says that, returning to Holland in July, 1914, he had been three years in Paris. This seems to me more exact. The "three years" were 1912, 1913, and half of 1914. There is no evidence of Mondrian's having been in Paris in 1910 or 1911. There is, on the other hand, abundant indication that he was in Holland during those years. At the October, 1911 exhibition of the Circle of Modern Art he showed only work done in Zeeland, and this itself is a telling fact. In addition, I have the testimony of Mr. Van den Briel, who was appointed forester at Hilvarenbeek, a village close to the Belgian frontier, in 1911. He was visited there by Mondrian in the fall of that same year. "It was only after that," says Van den Briel, "that he left for Paris, where I visited him in 1913." According to the Registrar's office in Amsterdam, Mondrian left that city on December 20, 1911.

Because of Mondrian's poor memory, all the biographical sketches, including my own, have him come to Paris in 1910. But I had my suspicions, and in preparing this book I made a more careful investigation. Now the mistake is corrected. As a result, certain of Mondrian's works can now be dated more easily.

It was Conrad Kickert who brought Mondrian into contact with Cubism, by introducing Braque and Picasso into Holland, in 1911. But it is incorrect to say that he had also introduced Matisse, three years earlier, as James Johnson Sweeney believes. I questioned Kickert himself on that point. "I? Introduced Matisse in Holland?" he exclaimed. "But everybody knows that I always detested Matisse. Rightly or wrongly, I never in-



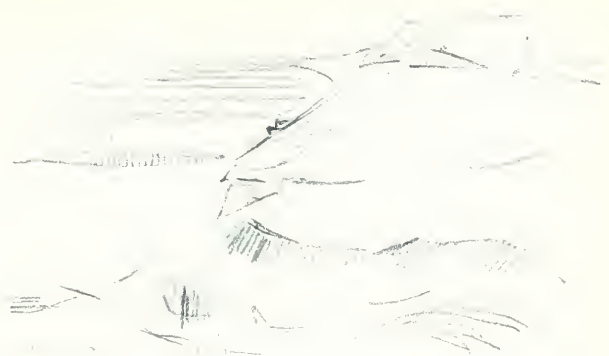
vited him to exhibit at the Circle of Modern Art, or elsewhere, and I never discussed him in my articles." Mondrian could not, therefore, have known the work of Matisse before coming to Paris. If he was influenced by him to any extent, this could have come about only indirectly, through Sluyters, who was nicknamed the "Dutch Matisse."

In 1909 and 1910, Kickert was in Paris. He was the correspondent of the Dutch weekly *De groene Amsterdammer*. On his return to Holland, he founded the Circle of Modern Art, as noted above, and he must be credited with having been the first in his country to collect Cubist paintings. Moreover, his interest in French art did not make him neglect his countrymen, and he bought a number of canvases by Mondrian, who was often a summer guest at his villa at Zandvoort by the Sea. He told me that there Mondrian was greatly attracted to a beautiful blonde, also a guest at the villa. But the young lady did not respond to Mondrian's attentions, and the latter became most unhappy. "Poor Piet," says Kickert, "it was always the same story every time he fell in love, and it always upset him."

Mondrian's entire love life was marked by such failures, affairs which were always cut short; there were also one or two broken engagements. But he was always prone to quick infatuation, like a college boy. So strongly did he feel the lack of a woman in his daily life that he always kept a flower – an artificial flower suggesting a feminine presence – in the round vase standing on the hall table of his studio at the Rue du Départ. This was something so strange and unexpected, that in 1926 I had it photographed. Mondrian did not lack a certain attraction for women. But, despite his simplicity, they soon found in him something mysterious and impenetrable which turned them away. At times he had a priestly air, something no woman likes. Beneath the surface there was always a major concern which would compromise with nothing. Even though, like Baudelaire's albatross, he had "giant wings," he was able to walk, provided he could walk slowly at his customary pace. But those "wings" did scare off other birds.



Dunes and Sea
Dünen und Meer – Dunes et mer (1908)



Dunes and Sea
Dünen und Meer – Dunes et mer (c. 1909)



Dunes and Sea
Dünen und Meer – Dunes et mer (1909)





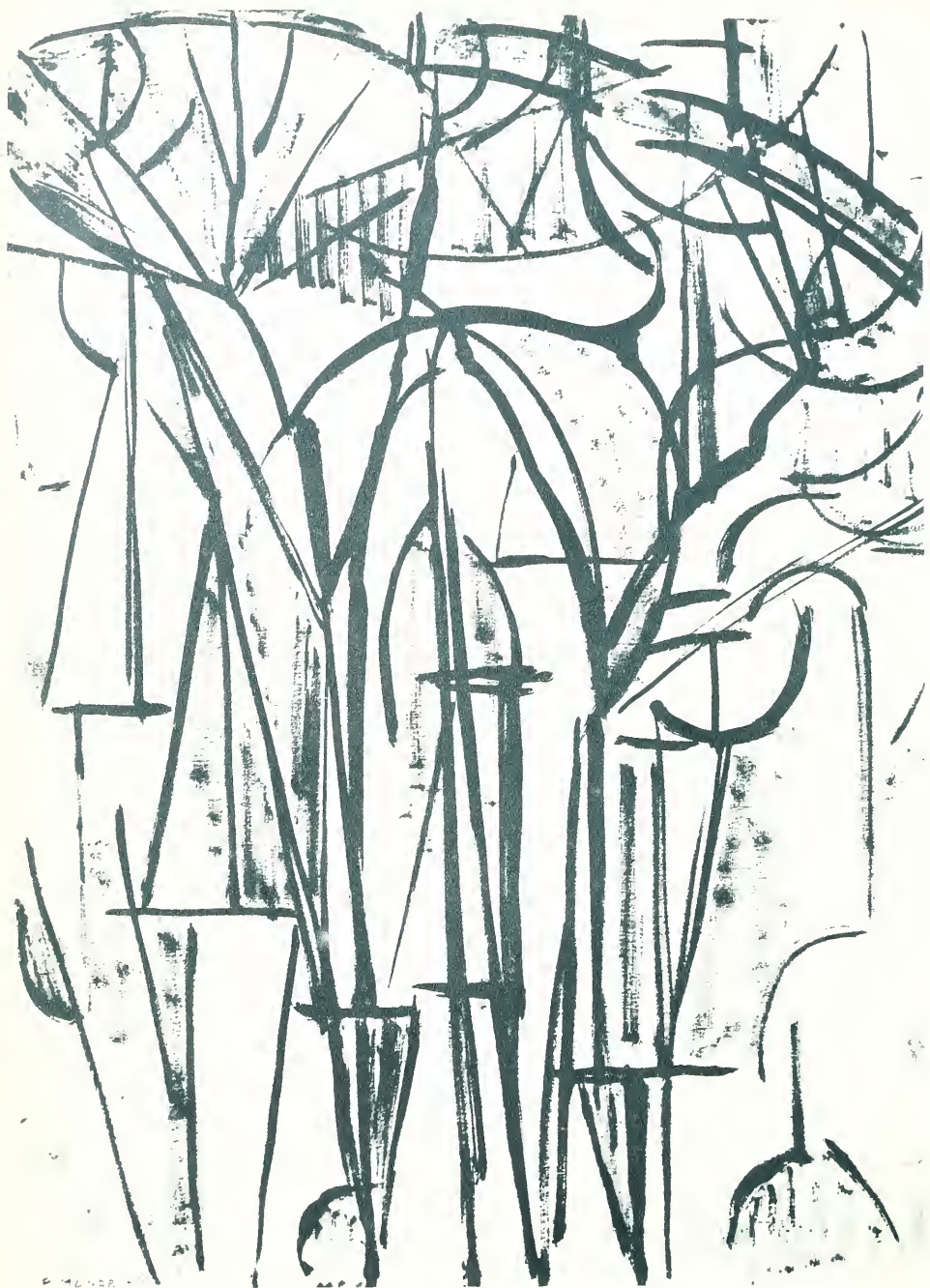
Tree – Baum – Arbre (c. 1909 10)

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Trees – Bäume – Arbres (c. 1909)



Tree – Baum – Arbre (c. 1910-11)



Composition with Trees – Komposition mit Bäumen – Composition avec arbres (c. 1912)

Paris in 1912! What could be more wonderful for a painter?

Paris in 1912

A believer in signs might say that this was surely the mark of a predestined career. The year 1912 is perhaps the most glorious in the history of painting in France. This was the apogee of Cubism, and Cubism is identified with Paris, is Paris itself, the real Paris, Paris without artifice. The Impressionists, who discovered outdoor painting, worked everywhere, in Brittany, in Normandy, in southern France, in London, in Papeete, and, of course, in the suburbs of Paris. The Fauves had a predilection for greenery, which, by the way, they painted red. But Cubism developed in Paris itself, in Montmartre, first between the Rue d'Orsel and the Rue Ravignan, then between the Boulevard de Clichy and the Impasse Guelma. When Braque and Picasso spent the summer at Céret and at Sorgues, they always brought along their mandolins, fruit dishes, absinthe glasses, female models, and, above all, their palettes, stressing the typical gray of the walls of Paris. Yes, 1912 is the most Parisian moment in painting; it is a moment which will never again be recaptured, no matter what importance Paris has in world art.

One has to mount the towers of Notre Dame to understand 1912; the Paris which extends below is an immense gray monochrome – Braques and Picassos of 1912 by the yard. The Ile Saint-Louis is a Cubist picture, the Latin Quarter is three or four overlapping Cubist pictures, the blocks of houses of the Ile de la Cité quarter make still another Cubist picture, and so does the section of the Hôtel de Ville; and the spire of Notre Dame with the Seine in the background, and the bridges and the quays, make a painting by Delaunay (with a rainbow to boot), and the rectilinear grill of the Hôtel Dieu hospital just below, at the foot of the Cathedral, is a post-Cubist painting by Mondrian – one done in 1914, if the sun is shining; in 1919, if the sky is dark.

Cubism was not only a natural reaction against the excitement of the Fauves ("I love the rule which corrects emotion," Braque said), nor was it merely the systematic application of Cézanne's remark in his famous letter to Emile Bernard ("Treat nature as cylinder, sphere, and cone"); it was, above all, Paris laid bare, Paris stripped of its trees, of its young women, of any illusion-engendering sunlight, Paris reduced to its essential substance, to its virile essence: the bones and marrow.

Since the birth of Impressionism, the role of Paris had grown steadily in the world of art. It was in Paris that all the great modern movements faced each other and fought it out. Here was the ideal ground for

those intellectual struggles from which everyone emerged victorious. Paris was the lazy vessel floating on the current of time, hailing every passing thing, an incomparable theater for the exhibition of innovations in a climate which knew no extremes.

The year 1912 was the summit of a development which began in 1874. But things could not have seemed as simple as this to Mondrian when he arrived in Paris. His first impression was doubtless that of an immense disorder, of an odd accumulation of various movements requiring on the part of the spectator a kind of mental gymnastics almost impossible to achieve. Let us look more closely at what was going on.

Cubism

Cubism had attained the full development of its analytical phase. Léger, Gleizes, Metzinger, Marcoussis, Villon, and others had for a year been part of the movement launched by Braque and Picasso, some of whose works already announced Synthetic Cubism. The first paper paste-ups (*collages*) appeared. In February, Severini organized the first exhibition of Futurist paintings at the gallery of Bernheim Jeune. At the Independents, Delaunay showed his *Simultaneous Windows*, a lyrical reaction against the resolute colorlessness of the Cubism of the four previous years. Gleizes and Metzinger published *On Cubism*, the first work devoted to the movement (*The Cubist Painters*, by Guillaume Apollinaire, did not come out until the following year). Daniel Henri Kahnweiler, a young art dealer who had come from Germany in 1907, defended the Cubists, and gave permanent exhibition to the recent works of Braque and Picasso in his little gallery, at 28 Rue Dignon, behind the Madeleine. The group called the "Golden Section" was formed in the studio of Jacques Villon. It held its first exhibition in October, showing works by Juan Gris, Gleizes, Metzinger, Léger, Delaunay, Marcel Duchamp, Picabia, Lhote, Jacques Villon, La Fresnaye, Marcoussis, and others. Cubism triumphed, and some canvases by Picasso, who was already famous, brought 4000 francs.

Let us not forget that at the same time the memory of the Fauves was still strong, that Expressionism had made its appearance, and that the Post-Impressionists had not said their last word. And this does not take into account the throng of unclassifiable tendencies and ephemeral celebrities. From all this topsy-turvy of research, overlapping movements, Negro influences, revolutions and counter-revolutions, enthusiasms for color and flights from it into austere gray, Mondrian retained but one thing: order, the need for order which could be sensed behind this effervescence.

Mill in the Sunlight – Windmühle im Sonnenlicht ►
Moulin au soleil (c.1911)



That is why Cubism attracted him at once; its germ was already in him. During the two years and seven months he was to spend in Paris (from the end of December, 1911 to July, 1914), it was the Cubism of the Right Bank, that of Braque and Picasso, that he followed most closely, rather than the coloristic Cubism of Léger and Delaunay, who were his neighbors on the Left Bank. The encounter with Cubism and with Paris seems to have crystallized his deepest aspirations: henceforward his values would be order, discipline, sobriety. But he would not proceed more rapidly than his natural rhythm allowed; step by step he would cross the distance still separating him from the Parisian movement. But, still unhurrying, he would go beyond it, reading more into the works of Braque and Picasso than they could themselves, carrying to the limit their unexpressed ideas, recording in clear logic the whole teaching of Cubism at the very moment when the great Cubist painters halted or went backwards. He was ten years their senior, and his maturity could be felt when, in 1913, he adopted their technique. With a serenity and an amplitude of inspiration not seen till that day, joined to great finesse, he gave us a more abstract Cubism; as a result, in these 1913–14 works of Mondrian, the French movement reached an unanticipated extreme. Mondrian was perhaps the least conspicuous of all the performers in the admirable concert of Cubism, yet even then it was clear that his voice would be the dominant one in the future.

When he came to Paris, Mondrian was close to forty. The experience he had behind him had well prepared him for the shock, and for extracting from the great movements of the day the gist of their message, the essence of their newness. "Life begins at forty." The prologue over, the curtain rises on a play in five acts of unequal length – Paris, Holland, Paris, London, New York. We may say that it was in Paris, in 1912, at the very moment he changed the spelling of his name, that the life of the great painter began. And if his previous work has considerable value for us, it is because it represented a long period of gestation which was brought to fruition by the vital air of Paris, producing one of the purest creators of the twentieth century.

An analysis of his works shows that Mondrian took part in the Cubist movement almost at once, though at first rather hesitantly. He needed several months of work to traverse the field and to reach, in 1913,



Still Life with Gingerpot, I p. 249
pp. 103, 247, 248, 250

Still Life with Gingerpot II, p. 101

the extreme limit of the avant-garde. Probably his point of departure should be looked for in the first version of *Still Life with Gingerpot*, and in the four rather dark canvases of the Slijper collection. However, he went back to the tree subjects he had done in Zeeland, organizing them rhythmically and simplifying his palette. Using the same method, he took up yet again the *Still Life with Gingerpot*.

By now Picasso and Braque were well on the way with Synthetic Cubism. Their works of that period showed less relief than those of previous years; the two painters tended to stick more closely to the surface planes of the canvas, and were thus closer to abstraction. Mondrian grasped perfectly the lesson in this constructive simplification, and soon brought Cubism, or, rather, his own cubism, to the point of complete abstraction. Later, as we know, the division of the surface would become for him the sole object of painting.

For the moment, the new development, then at its beginnings, was still related to his recent experiments at Domburg (the trees, the light-house, the church), but these experiments were now seen in terms of the typical gray of Paris houses and of the Cubist revelation.

Note 5

At that time some dozen Dutch painters lived in Paris. Mondrian does not seem to have sought them out; he did visit Kees van Dongen, Peter Alma, perhaps also Bendien, but only infrequently. I do not know what friends he had during this first stay in Paris. No doubt he was able to satisfy fully his taste for solitude. However, at the end of 1912, he was often in the company of a young Dutch composer, Jakob van Domselaer, newly arrived in Paris. During the entire winter of 1912-13 the two friends took French lessons together. I asked Van Domselaer if he remembered what he saw in the studio in the Rue du Départ. "Trees," he told me, "Nothing but abstract trees!"

Article by Apollinaire

In 1913 Mondrian participated in the twenty-ninth Salon of the Independents. Apollinaire, analyzing the exhibition room by room in *Montjoie*, wrote: "The very abstract Cubism of Mondrian – he is Dutch (Cubism, as we know, has made its entrance into the Amsterdam museum; while here the young painters are jeered, there the works of Georges Braque, Picasso, etc., are exhibited with Rembrandts); now Mondrian, offspring of Cubism, does not imitate the Cubists. He seems to have particularly been influenced by Picasso, but his personality remains entirely his own. His trees and his portrait of a woman show a sensitive intellectualism. This Cubism has taken a different path from the one that Braque and

Composition in Grey-Blue – Komposition in Grau-Blau
Composition en gris-bleu (c.1912) ▶



Picasso seem to be taking, with their interesting present explorations." (*Montjoie*, No. 3, March 18, 1913.) A year later, when Mondrian again showed at the Independents, André Salmon analyzed the show in the same journal. He did not venture a judgment: "I can't go off – no, really, that's too much to ask of me – on a joyous gallop at each new encounter. I have written enough times, said and repeated often enough, that I was without any prejudice, that nothing could surprise me and that nothing is a priori hateful to me; but such short trips through the virgin and really equatorial forest of the Independents did not leave me with the calm necessary to understand the completely new art, for such it seems to me, of Mr. Mondrian and of the young Dutch painters. I hate nothing more than injustice, whether ill-advised blame or undeserved praise. So I am not ashamed to withhold my judgment." (*Montjoie*, No. 3, March 1914.)

In November, 1913, Mondrian had also sent his work to the Third Exhibition of the Circle of Modern Art in Amsterdam. On this occasion, *De Kunst* printed a reproduction of the oval canvas from the Bremmer Collection, now in the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam. The canvas is a gem among the paintings of the period; it holds its own in every respect when hung next to the best contemporary works of Braque and Picasso. A Dutch critic, whose name I have not determined, said that the art of Mondrian is "pure feeling," that he "does not reason," that he "dreams in the abstract." The art critic's is certainly a thankless task! Think of the cruel judgment of those who happen to reread their hasty notes forty years later.

Search for Style

What are we to say now that it is our turn to review these works of 1913–14? One remark suggests itself immediately: Mondrian was searching for a style, for a new plastic language, which would give the contemplative gaze repose, rest, and confidence. It was the simplification of Cubism which set him on this route. The reserved palette dominated by grays, and the sober forms dominated by straight lines, gave the Cubism of these years a real nobility, which in the works of Mondrian would become singularly more penetrating, almost mystical. The ostensible subject (trees, scaffolding) is soon entirely abandoned, and from then on we get the magnificent series of compositions, some in oval, which are now scattered in the museums of Holland and New York – the great rose canvas in Amsterdam, the blue one in the Kröller-Müller Museum, the gold one in the Guggenheim Museum. Here Cubism gives its very essence in works of sober vigor and calm power, works which belong with the best



things in abstract art, and doubtless with the painting masterpieces of this century.

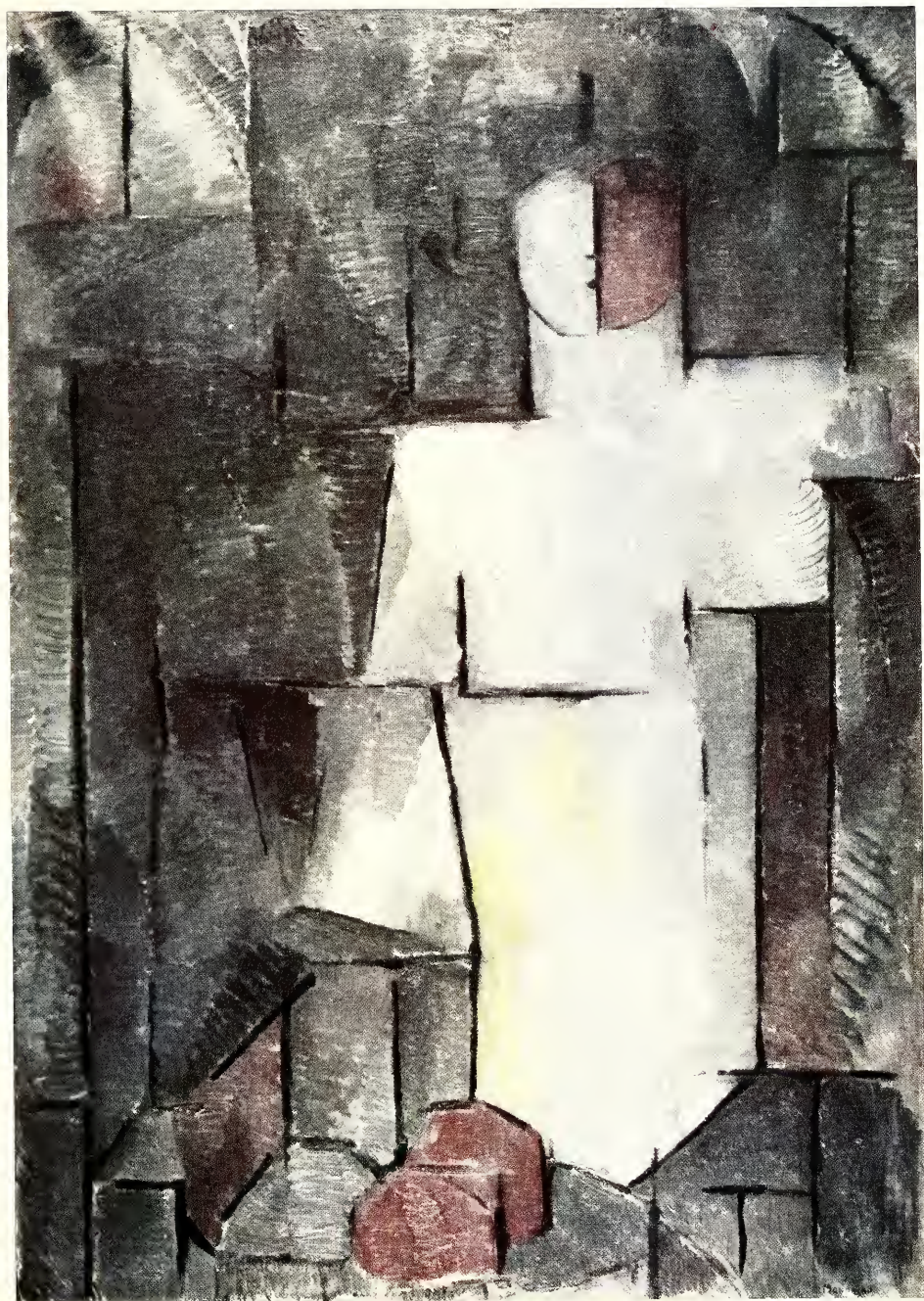
All art is simplification, that is to say, the reduction of detail to what is essential. Hence, all art moves toward style, which is simplification converted into a rule.

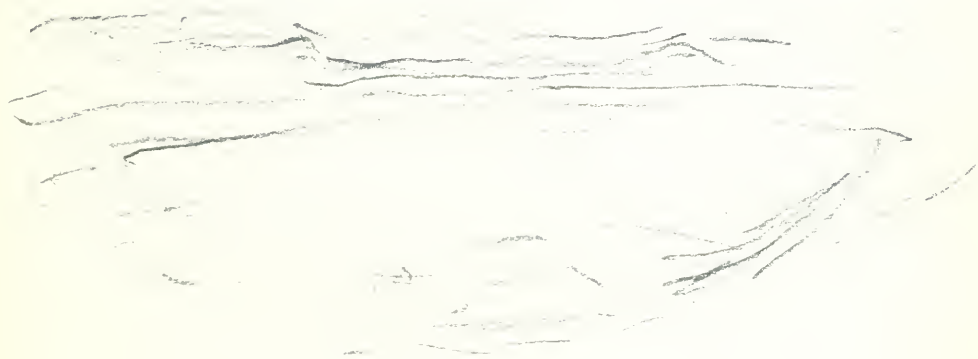
But various methods of simplifying are possible. One method consists in the elimination of details, so as to retain only those judged most important, which become the subject matter. Another seeks the fundamental law hidden in each detail, and strives to represent this law itself. One could give these methods philosophical names, calling the first one "inductive," the second, "deductive." It was the latter method that Mondrian chose, as all true metaphysicians do in philosophy. The universal concept he imposes on the object makes all objects (or all details) identical. Painting from that moment on becomes simply a variation on the theme of the identity of the details. Instead of eliminating the details, we now amplify a single detail in accordance with the law discovered. Each object (each detail) suggests the universal law pre-existent in the mind. The detail is subordinated to the law which transforms it. The transformed detail is liberated from its accidental form and becomes identical with the universal law. Such was Mondrian's method of abstraction during the years 1912–15.

Nature, seen and loved for itself, was progressively absorbed by a more powerful and more virile intellectual vision; and once nature had been completely absorbed, it was forgotten, even negated, and the intellectual vision was loved for itself.

While Mondrian often painted very rapidly – certain canvases of that period are done with hasty brush strokes, without apparent planning, being thought out as the work progressed – his development was always slow. Of him, more than of anyone else, we may say that he "chose the longest way home," and skipped no stages.

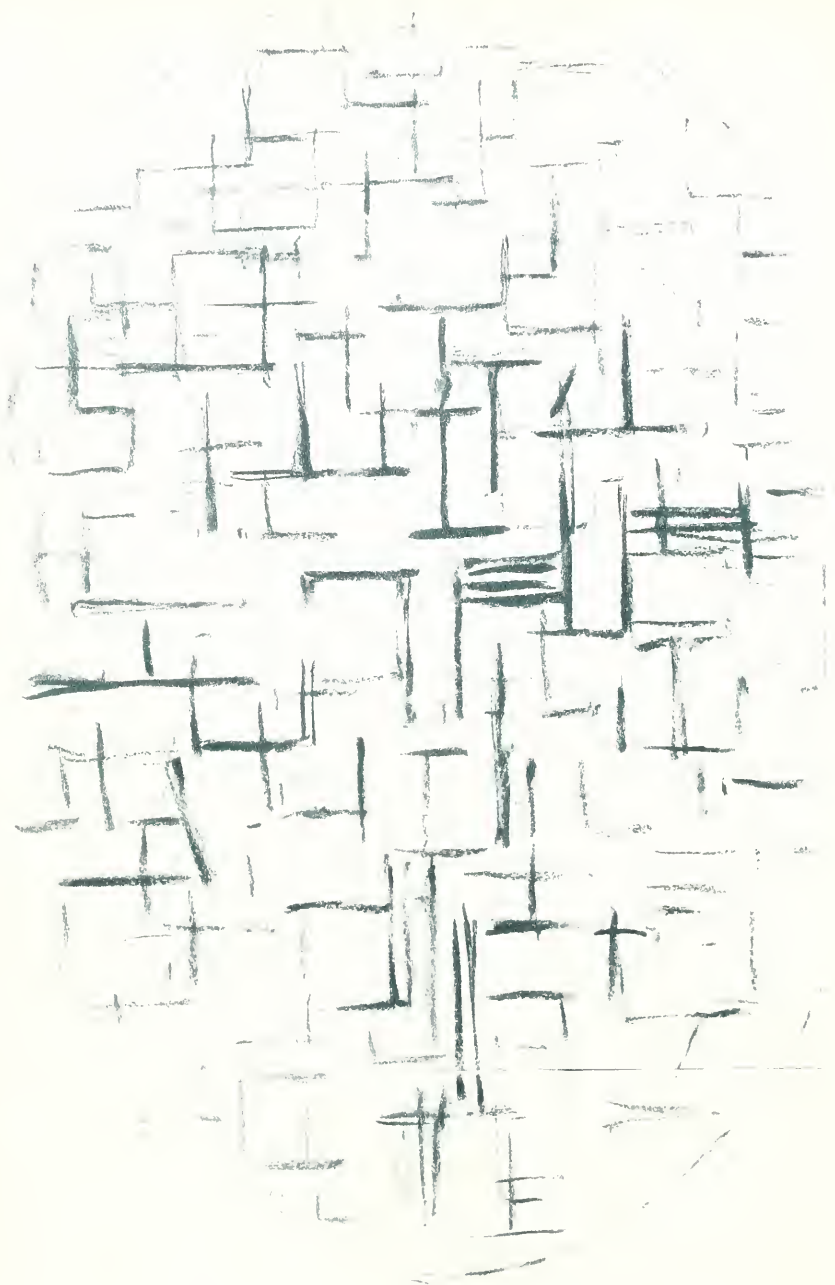
I admire such slowness of the mind's pace. It does not at all exclude passion, and it reaches its goal all the more surely, without stealing anything from time, and arrives with the fullness of real experience; to walk to the rhythm of one's heartbeat, that is the law; to run would be to arrive before the fated hour. And to arrive ahead of time is the same as to arrive too late.



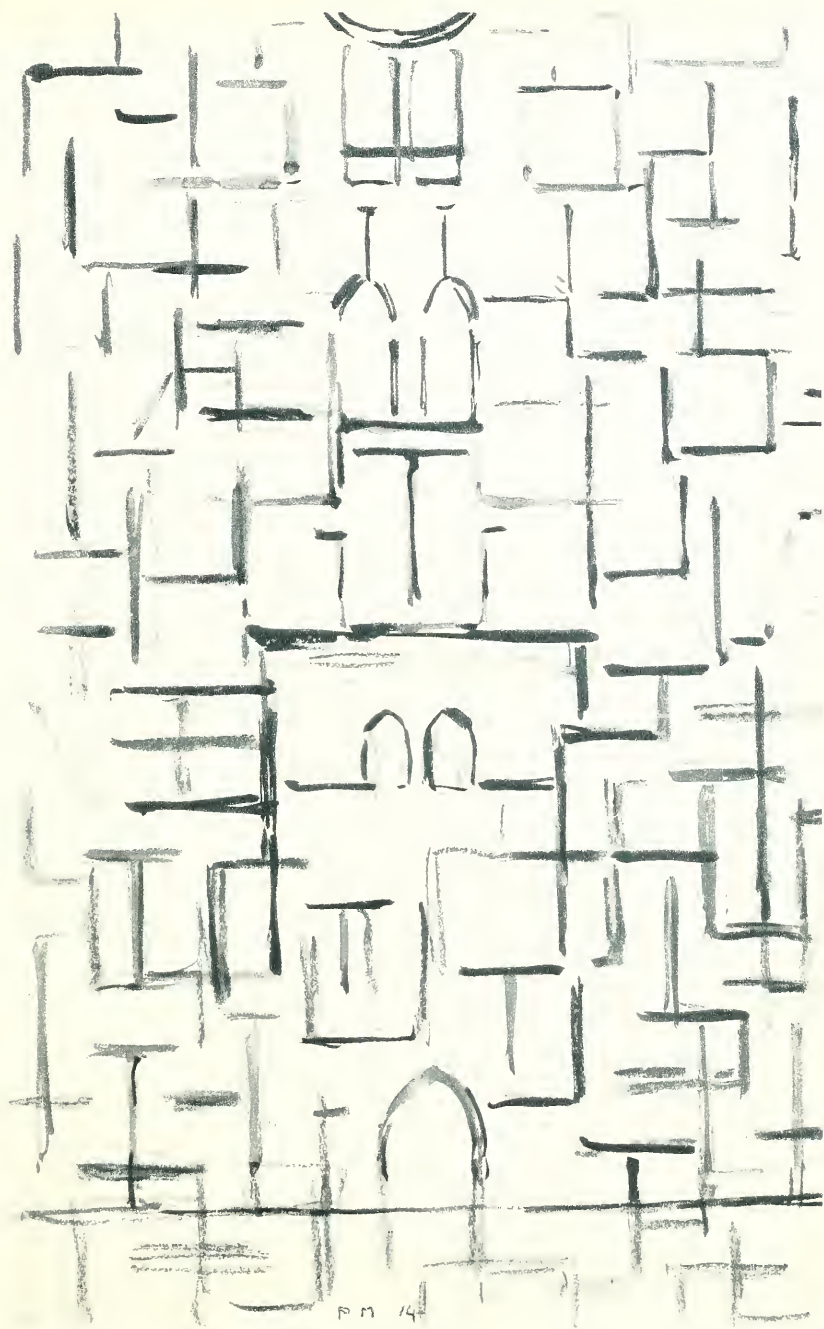


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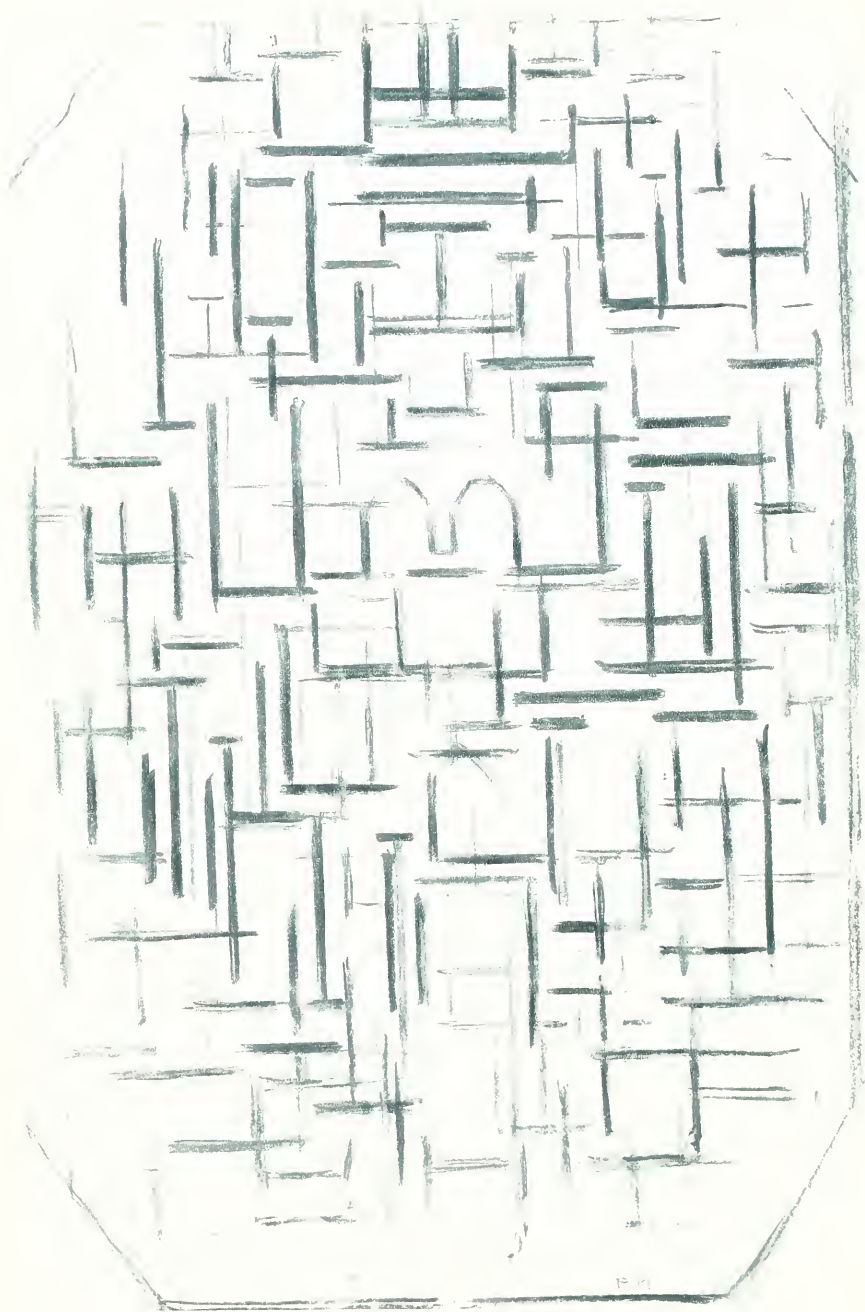
The Sea – Das Meer – La mer (c. 1914)



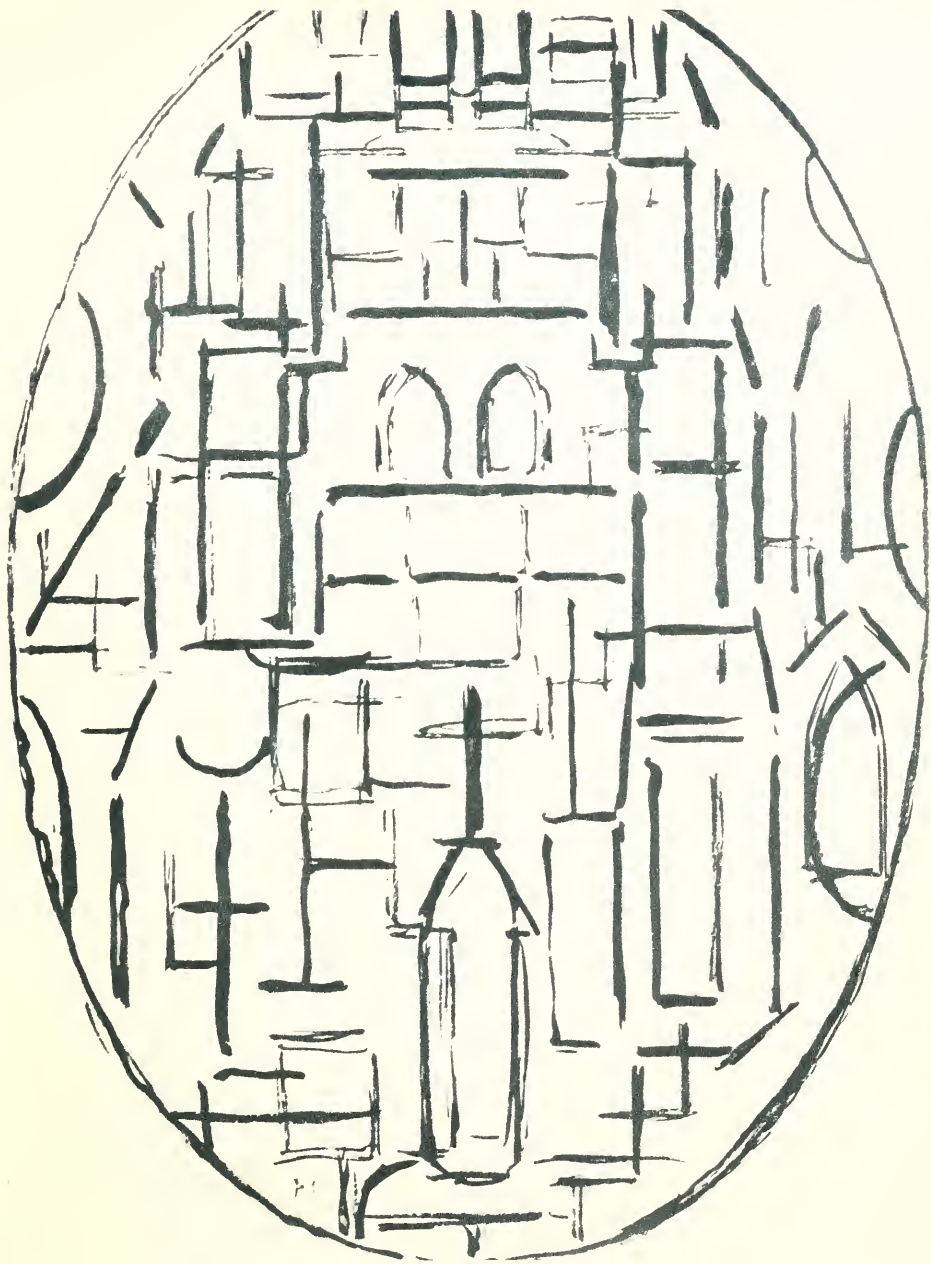
Church Façade – Kirchenfassade – Façade de l'église (1914)



Church Façade – Kirchenfassade – Façade de l'église (1914)



Church Façade – Kirchenfassade – Façade de l'église (1914)

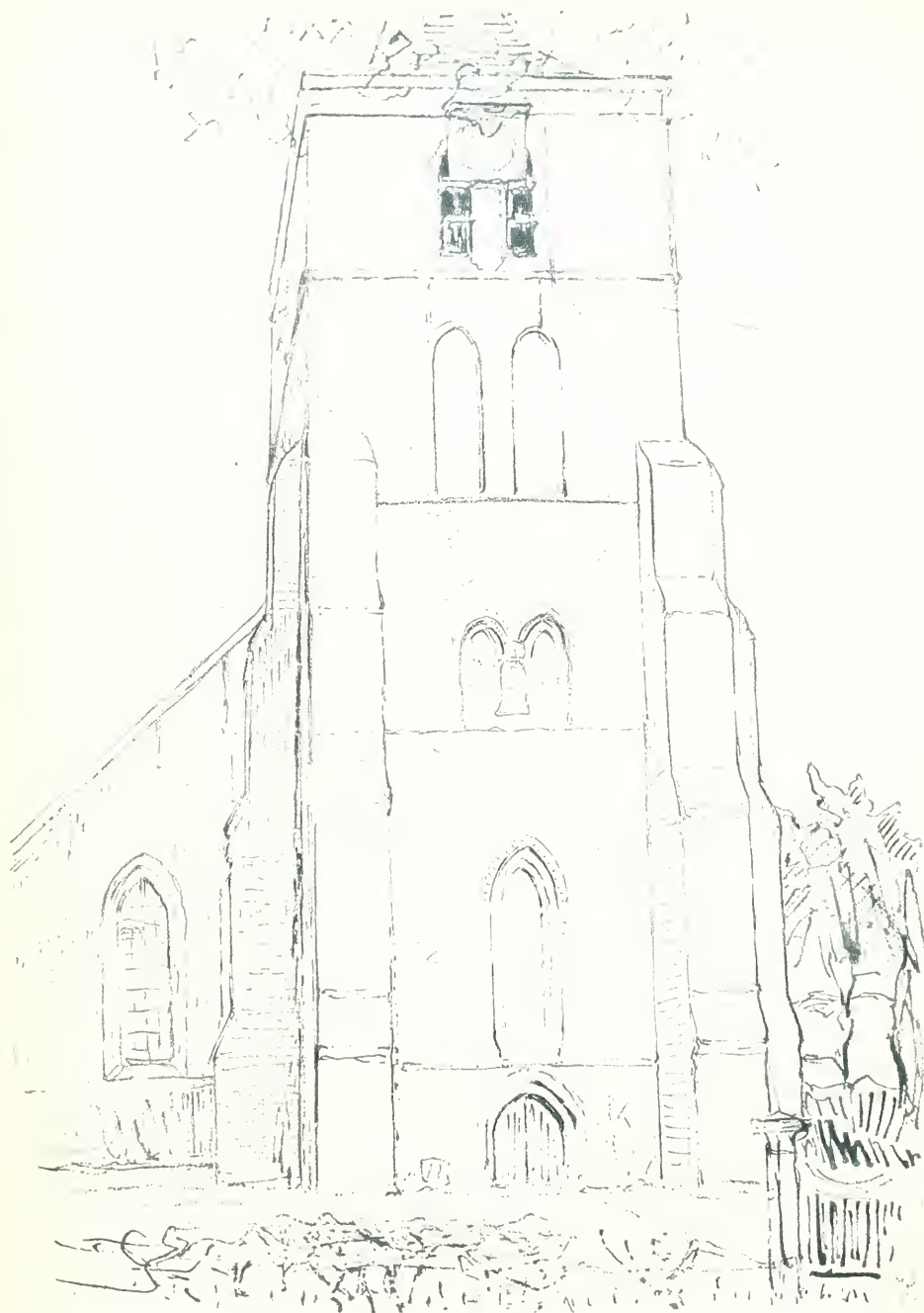


Church Façade – Kirchenfassade – Façade de l'église (c.1914)

+++ in der physischen Form
 in der Seele (physische Form,
 nicht Seele) in anderen Aus-
 drücken vorhanden - Dements-
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 mehr als eine andere an sich
 den auf der physischen Welt
 die menschlichen Formen
 dass durch sie auch eine
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 nicht zu sehen. Hiermit
 versteht sich das Geiste
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 Kontur der Natur.
 In der Natur, dass
 die physische Form.



Leaf from a Sketchbook - Blatt aus einem Skizzenbuch
 Page d'un carnet d'esquisse (c. 1910)



Church in Domburg – Kirche in Domburg – Eglise de Domburg (c.1909)

In July 1914, Mondrian was called to the bedside of his father in Holland. He closed Kickert's studio, took only the essentials for a short trip, and went off like a dutiful son.

Throughout his youth he had fought a violent struggle against his father's influence. No doubt he was reacting against Calvinist rigidity when he felt such spontaneous sympathy for the Catholic peasants of Brabant. Theosophy had also been, in the main, an escape from the paternal influence. "Mondrian's father," says Van den Briel, who had often seen him at the beginning of the century, "was sententious, forbidding, and imposed his stern will on everyone. He was frankly disagreeable."

Piet, who resembled his father only in his inner tenacity, must have suffered a great deal from this authoritarian parent. He himself was of a very different nature: very attentive to the ideas of others, rather silent, and always reasonable in discussion; he was given to phrases like: "Doesn't it seem to you that," "Don't you think that," "Perhaps on reflection," and it took a lot to make him depart from his habitual amiability.

Authoritarian Father

It was perhaps of his father's ideas he was thinking – to contradict them – when he wrote in his notebook, probably in 1910 or 1911:

Good and evil, beauty and ugliness, are only appearances. Someone will say: If only men had been better, this or that would not have happened. But though the good is needed, man is what he is. If man is "good," that is wonderful; if he is "bad," this is because he is a bit lazy and backward.

Evolution moves at a slow pace.

And the following, which would not be out of place in the Tao Te Ching:

Man can do something. But only very little.

Knowing nothing, he does everything badly. When he does nothing, he does his best.

And this brief Socratic thought, so far from Calvinist or any other kind of traditional moralism:

There is a cause for everything, but we do not always know what it is. To understand, to know – there lies happiness.

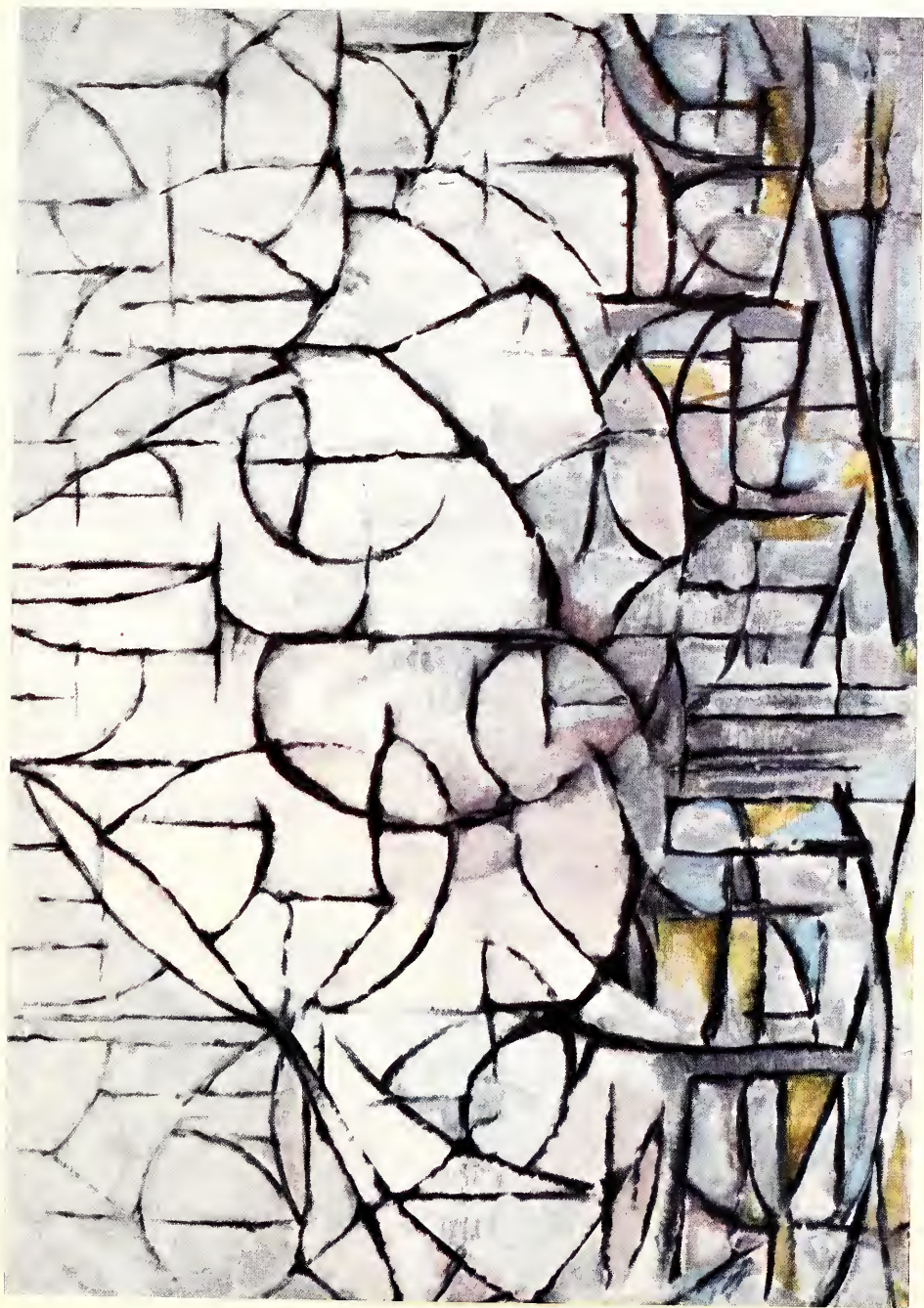
Mondrian had spent just a few days with his father, at the latter's place of retirement in Arnhem, and had seen only a few of his Amsterdam friends, when the war broke out. Belgium was invaded, no more trains left for Paris, and he found himself cut off in Holland. After some hesitation he decided to return to Paris by way of England. After all,

the only works of his to which he attached any importance were there. But his friends and relatives strongly urged him not to go by sea, and ended by convincing him to stay. So Mondrian spent four and a half years in his native country – precisely the duration of the war. Once the Armistice was signed, he took the first available train to Paris. He found his studio and all his canvases intact. But in the interval he had gone a long way, so that his canvases of 1913 and 1914 were almost as alien to him as had been his Zeeland and Brabant paintings in 1914. He was, in fact, no longer a native of his country. He was no longer in any group. One could no longer hang his pictures alongside those of Sluyters, Toorop, or even Van Dongen, who had himself lived for a long time in Paris.

p.31 Just the same Mondrian returned to Domburg, as one goes back to former loves. He had quite a few friends there (women especially), some of whom had been his pupils – Jacoba van Heemskerck and her sister, Miss De Sitter, Toorop and his daughter Charley, Mrs. Elout-Drabbe (who, in 1915, was to do a remarkable portrait of Mondrian), and Miss Tak van Poortvliet, then a famous collector, and owner of a beautiful estate quite close to Domburg.

His best friend, however, was the sea. But even though the sea was unchanged, he no longer saw it with the same eyes as before. The sea was not visible from the village proper. When he scaled the dunes, it suddenly appeared, with its immense terrace of pink sand, dotted by a double row of black piles driven into the water to break the waves; their immobility enhanced the moving rhythm of the waves. Mondrian loved the sea. Doubtless it was to be close to it that he went so quickly to Domburg, and his love for it may have had something to do with his allowing himself to be convinced to stay in Holland. Toward the end of his life, his only wish was to see the ocean once more (unpublished journal of Miss Charmion von Wiegand). It was in Domburg, in 1914, that he began the long series of drawings which attempt to interpret the rhythm of the sea; while at work on these, he jotted down remarks in his notebooks that are of capital importance for the understanding of his painting. These terse and concise ideas, thoughts taken down hastily (often in abbreviations), are the germ of the important essays he published later in *De Stijl*. They are at once simple and clear. These are not the aphorisms of a man of letters who wants to be original at all costs. They rather sum up (sometimes tentatively) the reflections of a man engaged in a passionate quest for a solid intellectual foundation for life and art. But the reader can judge for himself:

The Notebooks



Two paths to the spiritual: the path of doctrinal instruction or of direct exercise (meditation, etc.); and the slow and sure path of evolution. This is revealed in art. In art we see a slow growth toward the spiritual, but the artists are unconscious of it.

The conscious road of doctrinal instruction, in art, leads most often only to degeneration. When the two paths join, that is to say, when the artist finds himself on that plane of evolution where conscious and direct spiritual activity becomes possible, we are in the presence of ideal art.

An old soul (or an old stage of spiritual evolution) must dwell in a new body and slowly become conscious. Hence, young artists are different from old ones.

Each man, each thing, everything in this world has its reason for being. Everything is beautiful, everything is good, everything is necessary; the existence of each thing and each being has its relative value.

Likewise, all art is good. Everything belongs to a given period. But the stages of life do not always tally. Hence there is inequality (apparent) and mutual incomprehension.

What first captivated us does not captivate us afterwards (like toys). If one has loved the surface of things for a long time, later on one will look for something more. However, this "something more" is on the surface. The interior of things shows through the surface; thus as we look at the surface the inner image is formed in our soul. It is this inner image that should be represented. For the natural surface of things is beautiful, but the imitation of it is without life. Things give us everything, but the representation of things gives us nothing.

Art and Reality. Art is higher than reality, and has no direct relation to reality. Between the physical sphere and the ethereal sphere there is a frontier where our senses stop functioning. Nevertheless, the ether penetrates the physical sphere and acts on it. Thus the spiritual penetrates the real. But for our senses these are two different things – the spiritual and the material. To approach the spiritual in art, one will make as little use as possible of reality, because reality is opposed to the spiritual. Thus the use of elementary forms is logically accounted for. These forms being abstract, we find ourselves in the presence of an abstract art.

Note 6

Art should be above reality, otherwise it would have no value for man. (This superhuman place of art seems to physical man vague and misty, but to spiritual man something positive and clear.)

Since the masculine principle is represented by the vertical line, a man will easily recognize this element in the upright trees of a forest (for instance). He will see the complement to this (for instance) in the horizontal line of the sea.

A woman will recognize herself in the horizontal lines of the sea, and her complement in the vertical lines of the forest, the latter representing the masculine element. Thus each sex is affected in its own way.

This becomes something entirely different in art, since the artist is asexual. The artist projects the masculine and the feminine principles at once, and does not represent nature directly, so that a work of art is more than nature.

The positive and the negative are the causes of all action, they cause the loss of immobility, that is to say, of happiness. They are the cause of dizzy, eternal movement, and of successive change. They account for the impossibility of happiness in time.

The positive and the negative break up oneness, they are the cause of all unhappiness.

The union of the positive and the negative is happiness. The more the positive and the negative are united in a being, the happier he will be. This is very pronounced in the artist. Masculinity and femininity together. Since he is not purely masculine, he is found at a greater distance from the positive physical pole. On the other hand, he is closer to the positive psychic pole. To be purely positive or negative is to be unhappy. Because the positive cannot exist without the negative, and thus one seeks the other. It may happen that one does not find the other; thus one may be unhappy.

Art, being superhuman, fosters the superhuman element in man, and has consequently become a means of human evolution as effective as religion. Naturalistic or realistic art, on the contrary, entertains man with human things, and the beauty we thus admire is hardly more beautiful than what we see with our human eyes. This art has, nevertheless, its justification, because the humans to which it is addressed are not all equally human. The artist, by his intuition, sees things much more spiritually than does the common man. This is why he sees a more beautiful reality, and this is why his art is of benefit to the common man.

But the art-conscious layman needs in turn an artist who sees more beauty than he himself can see, and the latter needs abstract art.

We call matter that part of the mind which our senses can perceive. We can represent something of it, in an image, by means of our senses. We cannot represent at all what our senses cannot perceive.

Thus the representation of matter crumbles of itself when we no longer take matter into account. We then come to the representation of other things, such as the laws which govern the conservation of matter.

These are the great general principles which remain constant.

The surface of things conceals these laws from us. Now they appear, stripped bare.

When we represent something perceivable by the senses, we express something human, for we have personal experience of these things.

When one does not represent things, a place remains for the divine.

The surface of things gives delight, their inwardness gives life.

Art being life, it depends on the state of evolution and on the nature of society. Since modern science has confirmed the theosophical doctrine according to which matter and force (mind) are *one*, there is no reason to separate them. If it is true that matter and mind (force) constitute life, we must take both into account, and not just one of these two. One cannot create life, or art, with mind alone. Nor with matter alone. Creation is the unity of these two.

Note 7 What is life? We can conceive it as a repetition, always evolving, of joy, creation, repose. The masculine and feminine principles thus achieve unity in rest.

Composition No.3 (Trees) – Komposition Nr.3 (Bäume) ►
Composition No.3 (Arbres) (c.1912)



It is obvious that Mondrian's mind was more given to expressing itself in axioms than in well developed argument; he was more like Spinoza than like Erasmus. Some years later he wrote a very beautiful essay in the form of a dialogue, *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality* (*De Stijl*, 1919–20), which is pure Platonic dialectics.

Church Façades pp.106–109

At Domburg and during the winter at Amsterdam (his address was now at 55 Ringdijk), Mondrian continued his "abstractions" of church façades, and his abstract compositions in bright tones, in which the pinks and sober blues sing against the dominant grays. He also did some compositions in which ochers and browns are dominant. But his principal subject in 1914–15 was always the sea. "Looking at the sea, sky and stars, I represented them through a multiplicity of crosses. I was impressed by the greatness of nature, and I tried to express expansion, repose, unity. Perhaps that is why an art critic called one of these pictures 'Christmas.' But I felt that I still worked as an Impressionist, and expressed a particular feeling, not reality as it is." (*Towards the True Vision of Reality*, from the original manuscript lent by Miss Charmion von Wiegand.)

Note 8

The Sea Theme

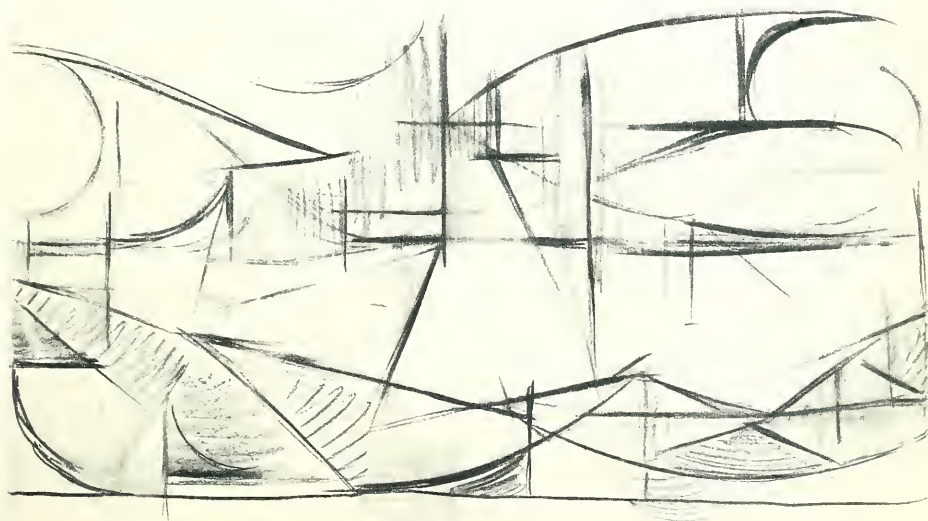
We can easily follow the slow evolution of the theme of the sea between 1909 and 1915. It begins with drawings that are still naturalistic, done from the height of a dune (I can almost locate the exact spot), with the perspective of the beach, where the breakwaters, following at regular intervals, trace many horizontal black lines, themselves composed of little vertical lines, so that they seem, in the play of perspective which makes them more compact, like a little forest advancing into the sea. In a diagram in his notebooks, Mondrian explains that the line of the horizon symbolizes repose, that the alignments of black piles, forming irregular horizontals "are not in repose, but indicate the direction of repose." This direction is a continuation of the short vertical – indicated by the position of the piles – which crosses the line of the horizon and gives, by means of the right angle obtained, the complete repose of the image, that is to say, "the masculine and the feminine, the spiritual and the material element, forming the unity of the whole."

During his stay in Paris, this theme was abandoned, though it is present in a way in his housefronts and scaffolding series. For these subjects brought him to the same affirmation of a horizontal and vertical rhythm.

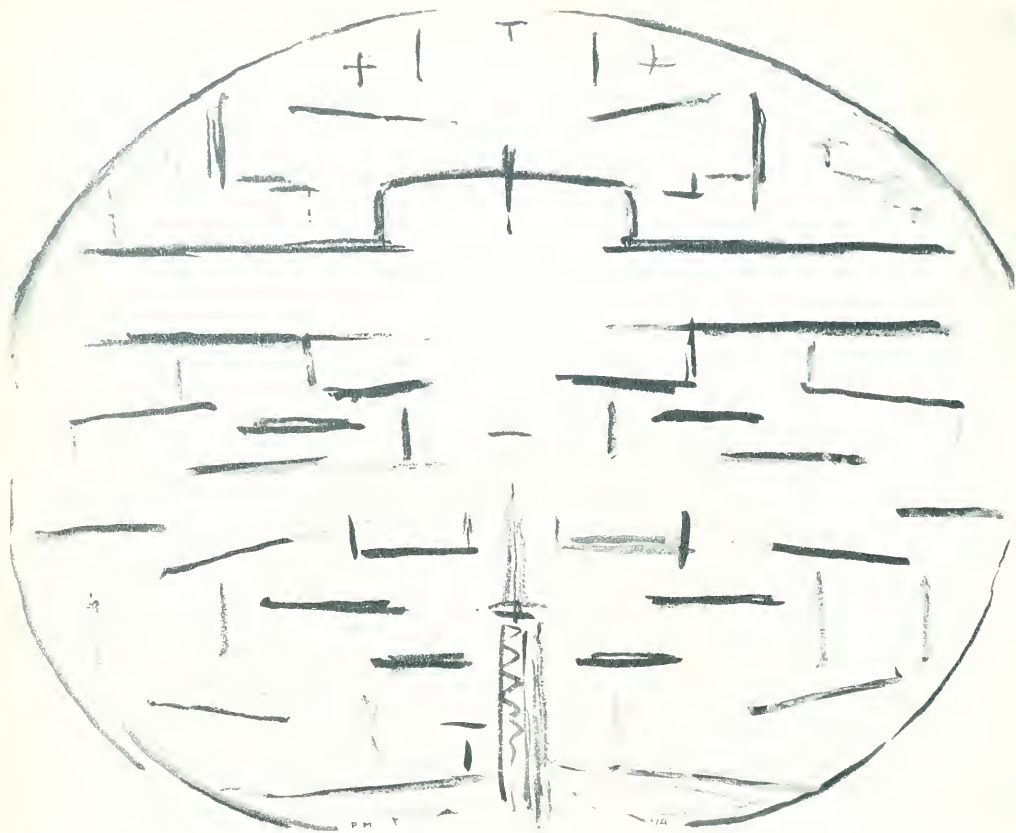
But on arriving at Domburg, in 1914, he took up the theme of the sea in a direct way, in a series of more ample drawings in which at first the horizontal is dominant. Then the vertical reasserted its rights and was emphasized by a sort of pathway extending to the middle of the drawing from the base of the composition. The idea for this crystallization of the vertical line was suggested to him by the Scheveningen pier, now destroyed.



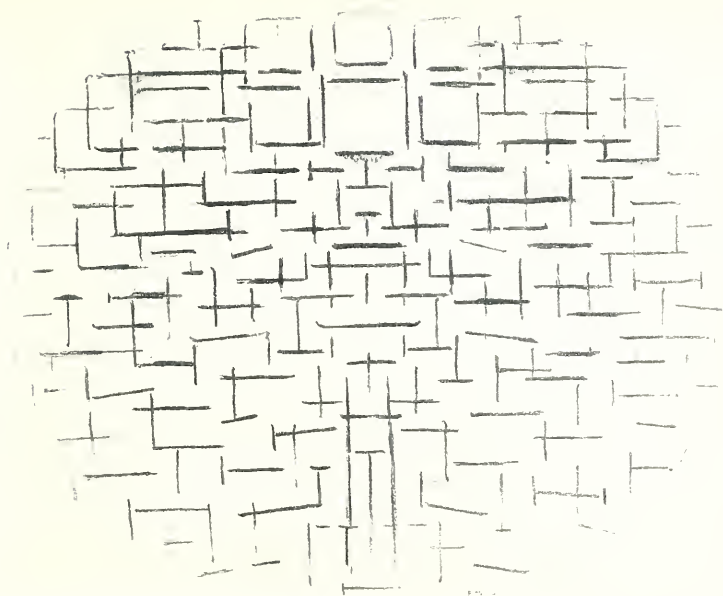
Self-Portrait – Selbstbildnis – Portrait du peintre par lui-même (c. 1911)



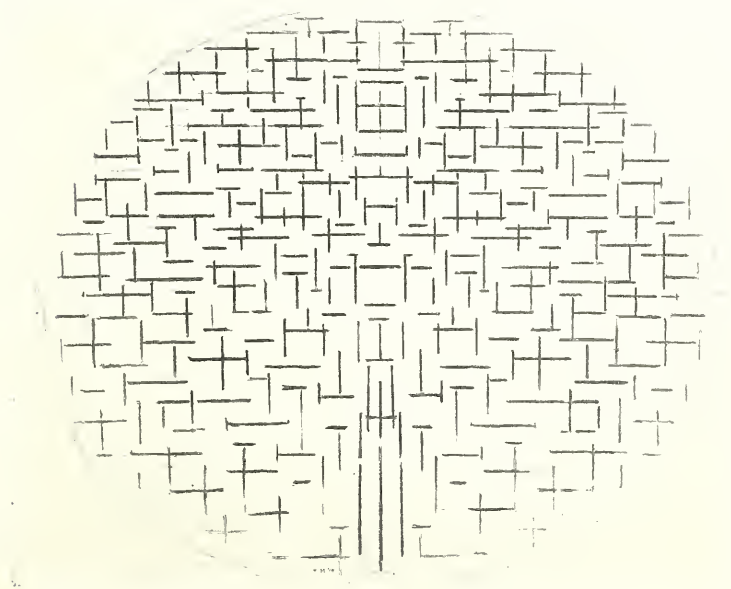
Nude (study) – Aktstudie – Etude de nu (1912)



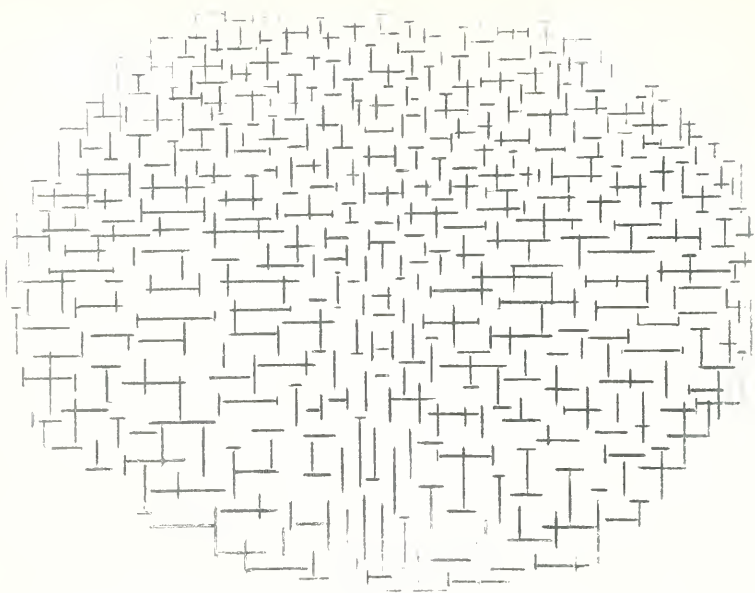
Pier and Ocean – Pier und Ozean – Jetée et océan (1914)



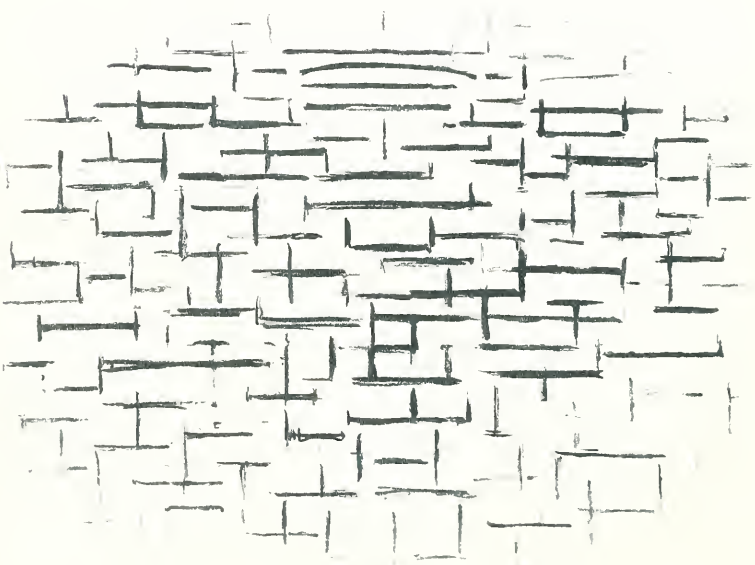
Pier and Ocean – Pier und Ozean – Jetée et océan (1914)



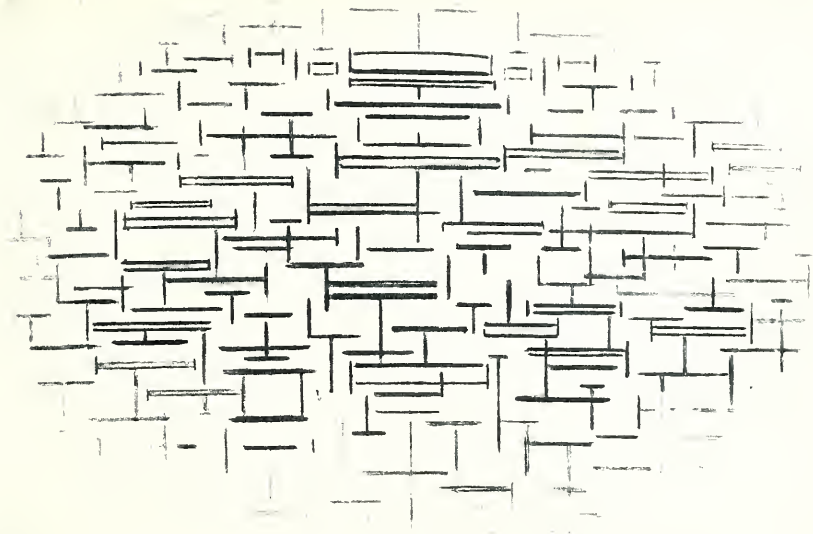
Pier and Ocean – Pier und Ozean – Jetée et océan (1914)



Pier and Ocean – Pier und Ozean – Jéfée et océan (1915)



The Sea – Das Meer – La mer (c. 1914)

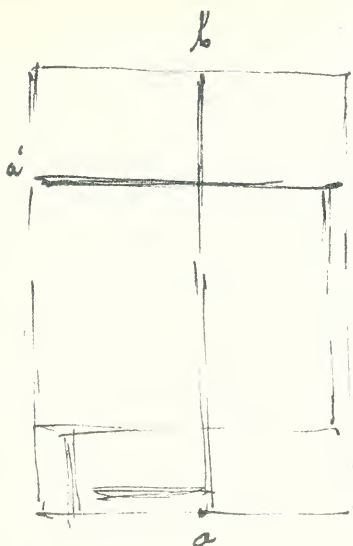


The Sea - Das Meer - La mer (1914)



The Sea - Das Meer - La mer (1914)

The last words of Mondrian, written January 1944 – Die letzten Zeilen Mondrians, Januar 1944
Les derniers mots de Mondrian, écrits Janvier 1944



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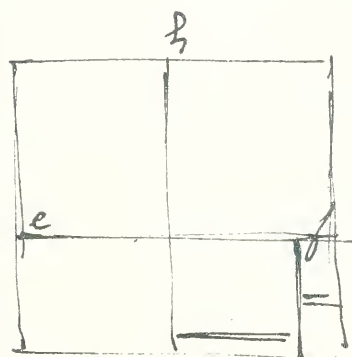
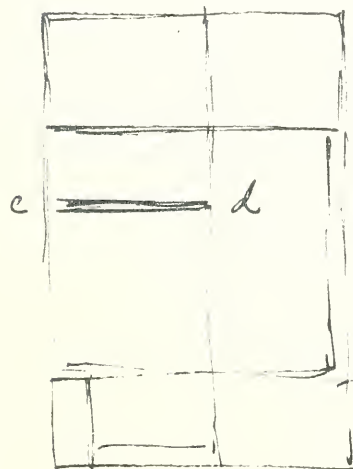


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Sketch for "Victory Boogie-Woogie" – Skizze zum «Victory Boogie-Woogie»
Esquisse pour «Victory Boogie-Woogie» (c. 1943)

The image obtained brings us back to the older theme of the tree, the vertical thrust in the center recalling the trunk.

Note 9

When this series of strange seascapes culminated in the big drawing at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1914) and in the painting at the Kröller-Müller Museum (1915), the observer found himself in the presence of a calm, mysterious majesty, holding the promise of an incredible burst of power. This sea, so intellectual and yet so alive, calls to mind the lines from the opening stanza of Valéry's *Le Cimetière marin*:

Midi le juste y compose de feux
La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée.
O récompense après une pensée
Qu'un long regard sur le calme de dieux!

[Exact high noon here weaves in sparkling fires
The sea, the sea that ever starts anew.
What a reward after a pensive pause,
This glowing calm of gods, this lofty view!]

Both painter and poet are equally modern, equally classical, equally Greek.

In 1916, Mondrian made the acquaintance of Bart van der Leck, at the Hague. A few weeks later the two painters met again at Laren, a village some 30 kilometers from Amsterdam and much frequented by artists. Mondrian had recently made several visits there. "He often went to paint at Laren," his brother told me, "and rented a room in the Pijlsteeg (Arrow Alley)." Now he lodged with his friend Jakob van Domselaer, and took his meals at the home of an old and faithful admirer, Mrs. Hannaert. Moreover, he had a little studio half-way between Laren and Blaricum. At Blaricum he often went, usually on Sundays, to see Salomon Slijper, who later became a close friend. "There were often many people at the farm on Sundays," Mrs. Slijper relates, "young people especially. Piet enjoyed dancing with a pretty girl, but he never mixed for long with the crowd. He would disappear, and I would almost always find him in my back kitchen, far from the noise, sitting calmly in a corner. He generally came for lunch, and on Sundays always brought a little something, a drawing or a sketch, as a gift."

Bart van der Leck

He often went to the home of Van der Leck – "every evening," the latter told me – to talk about painting.

I have never understood how Van der Leck could have had any influence whatever on Mondrian at that particular moment. Van der Leck's paintings are cold and superficial; their style suggests chromos. There is something pitilessly hard in the works of Van der Leck of this

period. Mondrian was, on the contrary, all warmth and inwardness. He had long sought inwardness in his art. Extremely sensitive, he strove to reconcile opposites. His vision of the world was entirely spiritual. That of Van der Leek was rather anecdotic and trivial. But the facts are there. Mondrian tells in a little piece, written in 1931, how he met Van der Leek, "who, even though his works were still representational, painted in flat areas of pure color." And he adds: "My technique, which was more or less Cubist, hence still more or less pictorial in nature, was influenced by his exact technique."

Note 10

p. 264, C. C. 290

So it was Van der Leek who influenced Mondrian to paint in flat surfaces, and to use rectangular planes of pure color. Their earliest appearance is in two little canvases of 1917 which are now in the Kröller-Müller Museum, and in the large black-and-white painting of the same year in the same museum. On the other hand, it seems that it was Mondrian's example which led Van der Leek to abandon naturalism. Van der Leek's transformation was abrupt; it was not the result of a slow development, as in Mondrian, and it proved ephemeral. By 1918 he returned to representation, albeit somewhat schematized, often reduced to a few lines, a few areas of color on an always white ground. But Van der Leek denied that he was "abstract," and did not conceal his opinion that Mondrian was following the "wrong path."

One day in 1916, or 1917, there was a happy surprise for Mondrian of which he at once informed Slijper. "The art critic Bremmer must have seen my canvas in Amsterdam," he wrote to Slijper, "for I received a letter from him. Among other things he writes: 'Your activity and effort inspire my sympathy, and I admire and esteem your work. I assume, in view of the character of your work, that you have material difficulties. If such is indeed the case, I should like to make you a proposition in order to help you a bit in this regard. I will send you 600 florins a year, in monthly payments of 50 florins. In exchange, I propose that you reserve four of your works for me, preferably not too big, let us say 80×60, not larger.' Isn't that handsome? It will give me a little security and enable me to continue working, and if he continues to support my work, that will be useful to me in the future. So I have accepted."

H. P. Bremmer, Dutch art critic and distinguished lecturer, was the personal adviser of Mrs. H. Kröller-Müller. It was under his almost exclusive guidance that the famous collection, which became the Kröller-Müller National Museum in 1937, was formed. For this, Henri van de

Oval Composition (Trees) – Komposition in Oval (Bäume)
Composition ovale (Arbres) (1913) ►



Velde had a sober looking building set up right in the forest, not far from Arnhem.

Alas! Envy and slander put a quick end to the admirable relationship of Bremmer and Mondrian. In 1919, on returning to Paris, Mondrian was informed that the agreement with Bremmer was canceled; no reason for this was given. He thus was deprived of the meager subsidy he had counted on to safeguard his freedom. In the following years he was to feel this blow most keenly.

In another letter to Slijper, I find a passage whose full meaning can now be grasped: "Since you write that you are so melancholy, I must write to you again. On the surface, I lack spirit, but, as you pointed out, I have inner spirit. This is expressed more easily in conversation than in a letter. But perhaps something of it will show through. As you know, I have had to go through some hard trials, and not a few of them – rather no, you don't know much about it – but I have always emerged laughing inwardly. That is why the most bitter disappointment could never make me unhappy, despite everything."

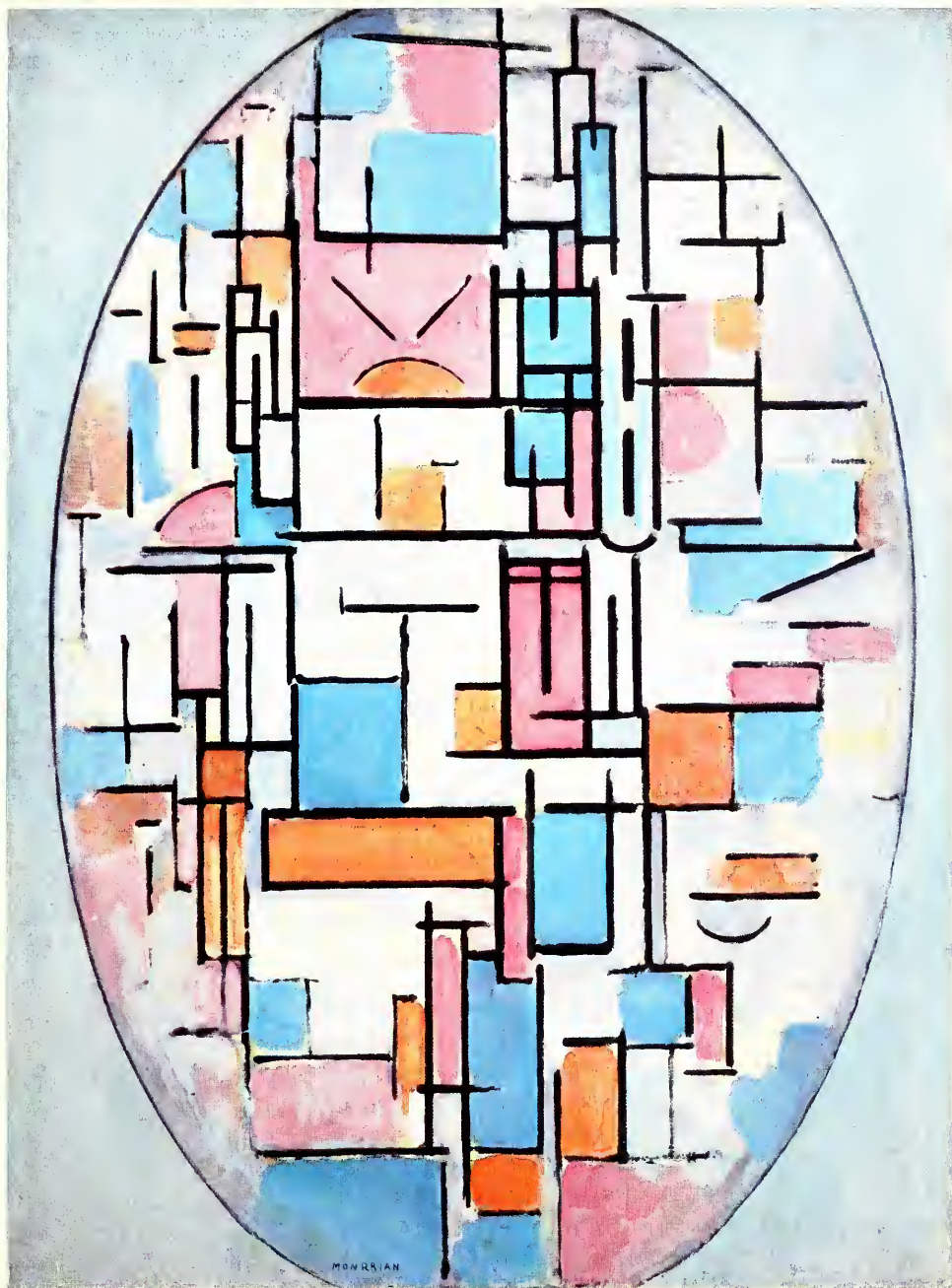
Only once again, in 1923, did Bremmer advise purchase of a little canvas of Mondrian for the Kröller-Müller collection: and this was in response to a letter pleading the painter's cause.

But Bart van der Leek was never without regular aid; the same museum owns his works by the *hundreds*. It contains *nine* Mondrians.

In Laren at that time there also lived a writer on theosophy, Dr. M. H. J. Schoenmaekers. He was a former Catholic priest, who had worked out, over a period of years, a personal system which he called a "positive faith." He had published several works of popularized philosophy, the most important of which were *Het Geloof van den nieuwen mensch* ("The New Man's Faith") and *Het nieuwe wereldbeeld* ("The New Image of the world"). Mondrian seems to have especially loved this last book. As I noted in another chapter, he owned two copies, one of which he gave me. He had observed that I was "ready for it."

Schoenmaekers' two books reveal a striking affinity between his thought and the ideas in Mondrian's notebooks. Schoenmaekers writes, for instance, that the artist "is a mystic to the degree that he contemplates living reality." He gives this very simple definition of style: "The general, despite the particular." Elsewhere he says that the new image of the world should achieve "a controllable precision, a conscious penetration of

Oval Composition with bright colors – Komposition mit hellen Farben in Oval
Composition ovale avec couleurs claires (1913) ►



reality, an exact beauty.” Schoenmaekers is an extremely clear writer. It is evident in many places that Mondrian borrowed from him part of the terminology he used in the important essays he was to publish in *De Stijl*. Incontestably he owes to him a key term, *nieuwe beelding*, which we translate somewhat awkwardly as “new plastics” or “neo-plasticism,” and which the Germans translate more correctly as *Neue Gestaltung*.

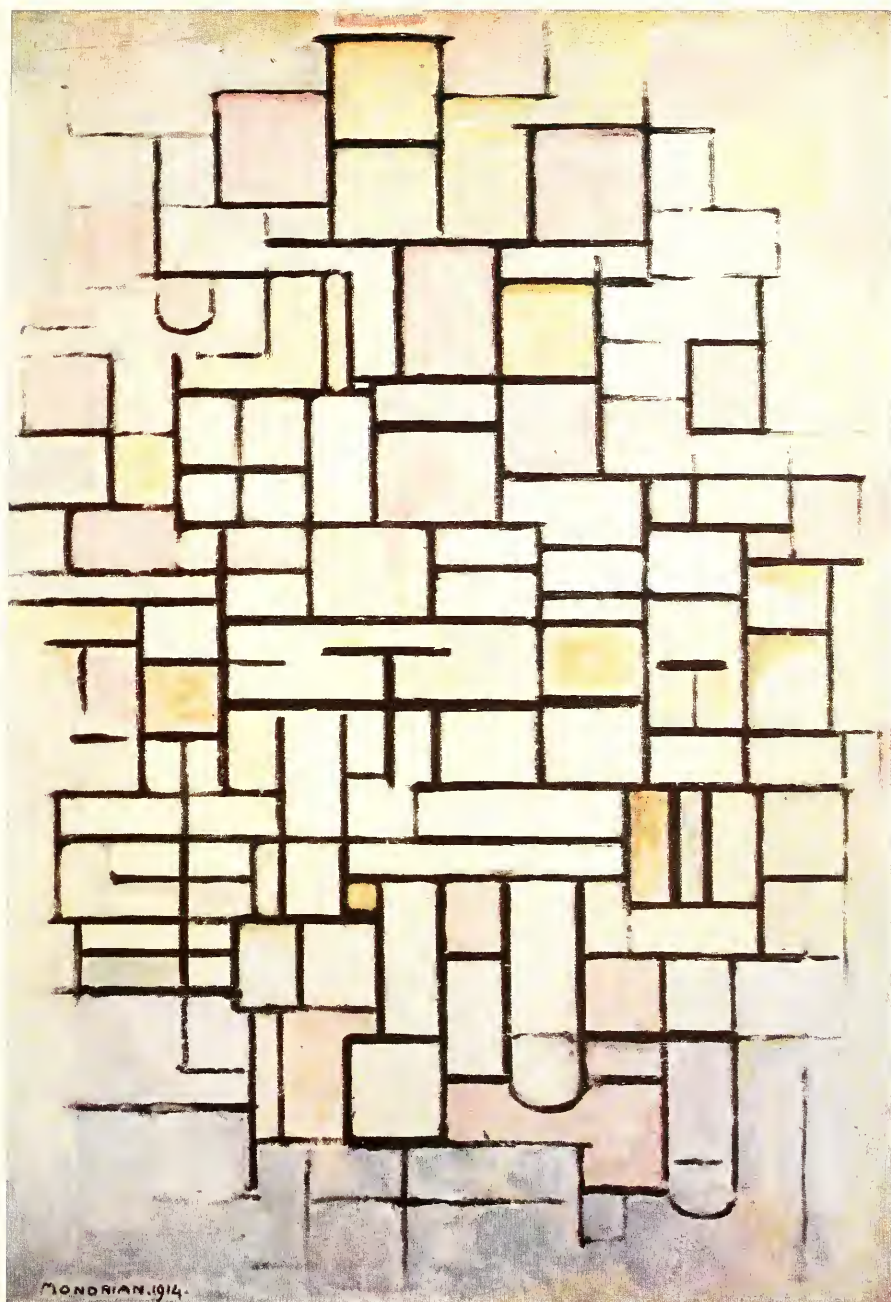
Mondrian quotes Schoenmaekers somewhere in the third number of *De Stijl*. But if he had great admiration for the works, he was ill at ease in the company of their author. He found the man much too intellectual, a too brilliant talker, too given to formulas. “He doesn’t have it in his blood,” Mondrian said of him, “he knows it with his intelligence, but he remains cold.” Mondrian, himself, certainly did not have as quick an intelligence; whatever he learned was never for display, but it gradually enriched his inner depths. So the two men were not attuned to each other.

I got these details from Van Domselaer, who also threw some light on the slander which put an end to the contract with Bremmer. About this he had been told by Bremmer himself.

Note 13

Van Domselaer published in 1916 a series of little works for the piano entitled *Proeven van Stijlkunst*. The seven pieces which make up this album were all inspired by paintings of Mondrian. In an introductory note the author asks that they be played in such a way that the static element (the harmony) be accentuated, while the movement (or the melody) remains peaceful and flowing. Which amounts to saying he wanted his work played in the horizontal and vertical style. “I tried to translate into music my impression of Mondrian, both the man and his works,” Van Domselaer told me. “I was then entirely under his influence. I realize, now more than ever, how essential it was for me to meet Mondrian. He was a man magnificently rooted in his period, and far superior to his countrymen, who were much too bourgeois. At the end of 1916 there was a disagreement between us. Mondrian continued toward a certain dogmatism, in which I could not follow him. Our last meeting was in Paris, in 1922. I must tell you that Mondrian considered his work achieved after 1914, that he had done what he had to do. ‘But what will you do after the war?’ I asked him. ‘I’ll return to France just the same,’ he replied, ‘even if I can’t sell any paintings. I’ll go to the south and work for a peasant, picking olives.’”

Fate, always playing tricks, decided otherwise – despite Mr. Bremmer! There are many people even today for whom the work of Mondrian begins only with Neo-Plasticism, that is, in 1918 or 1919.



In October, 1915, Theo van Doesburg published an article in a small Dutch newspaper (*De Eenheid*), in which he discussed Mondrian's painting with sympathetic understanding. Mondrian was then exhibiting with several other painters in the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam. The article started a friendship which two years later led to the publication of *De Stijl*.

Van Doesburg was a very active person, one well informed about all the avant-garde tendencies in art in the various European countries. He painted, wrote, gave lectures, worked with architects. Mondrian was eleven years his senior. Moreover, Mondrian had just spent two years in Paris, during which his art had undergone a radical transformation. His experience as a painter was longer and more intense than that of Doesburg, and he, too, as his notebooks show, had the itch to put his ideas on paper.

However, when Doesburg spoke to him about starting an art review, Mondrian was at first reserved. He thought the time was not ripe, that Doesburg should confine himself to a column in a newspaper, and that the diffusion of new ideas should proceed slowly, step by step. But Doesburg's enterprising spirit had the upper hand, and in October, 1917 the first issue of *De Stijl* appeared. In it Mondrian began publication of a long essay, *New Plasticism in Painting*, which was followed by several others. During the first three years of the magazine's existence, he played the leading role on it, writing the longest and, intellectually, most vigorous articles. This activity, together with his previous achievements, fully justified Doesburg in writing in the fifth anniversary issue of *De Stijl*; "While various artists in many countries have worked towards elaborating the new plastic expression, and this consciously or unconsciously, it is the painter Piet Mondrian who, around 1913, first arrived at Neo-Plasticism in painting as a logical continuation of Cubism. This won the support of the younger generation in Holland and filled the most advanced painters with confidence in the potentialities of a new mode of expression. Through Mondrian's works as well as through his writings, they became completely conscious of the positive value, and future significance, of Neo-Plasticism. Thus it was that *De Stijl*, which hails Mondrian as the father of Neo-Plasticism, has become the credo of a non-national, non-individualistic and, ultimately, collective power of expression." (*De Stijl*, December, 1922.)

And in a little book published in Amsterdam in 1919, Doesburg, writing along these same lines, says: "This new way of painting got its first

Founding of *De Stijl*

powerful impact from Piet Mondrian in 1913.” (*Drie voordrachten over de nieuwe beeldende kunst*, p. 90.)

Note 14

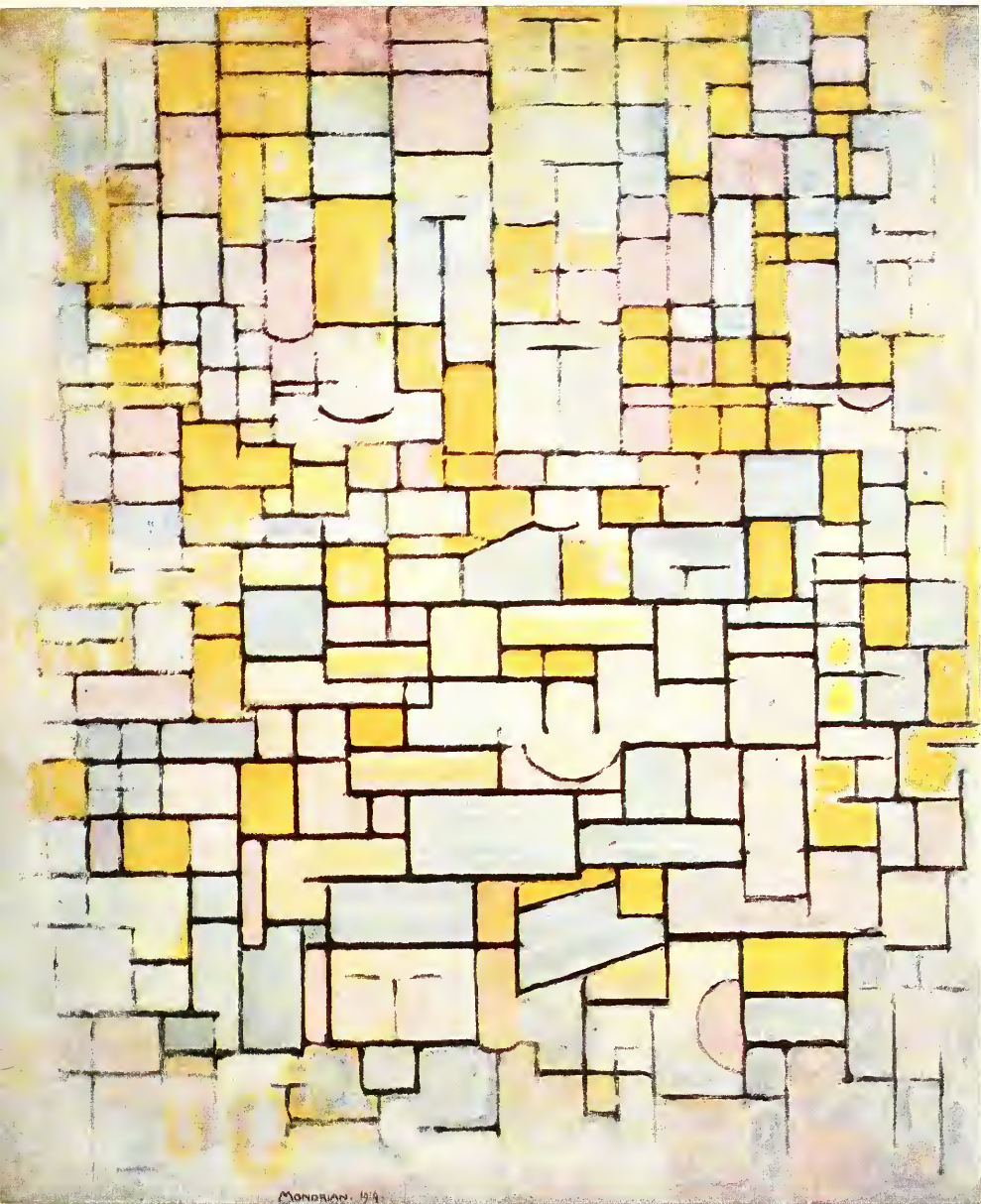
Bart van der Leek claims that he was the father of the movement. Here are his own words: “Mondrian came to my place one day with Doesburg, whom I had never seen before. When Doesburg noticed an abstract painting right on the easel, he exclaimed: ‘If that is to be the painting of the future, may I be hanged right now!’ Well, a few months later, he was painting in precisely that manner. That’s the sort of person Doesburg was. No ideas of his own. And a cheat into the bargain. After a long discussion, we agreed on the usefulness of founding an art review without any architects on it. It was to be edited solely by painters, and be directed against the architects, that is, against their meddling with color, which should be the business of the painter. This would at last put things in the right place: to each his own skill. We were entirely in agreement on that score. But when the first issue appeared, there were several architects among the contributors. This was precisely the opposite of what we had agreed to. No one had tipped me off. I was just shown the ‘fait accompli,’ like that. That couldn’t go on: I immediately resigned.” (Notes taken during a conversation with Van der Leek, at Blaricum, in 1950.)

It is possible, though far from certain, that the idea of an abstract art of geometric, flat planes was launched in Holland by Van der Leek in 1916. On the other hand, it is certain that Mondrian had made incontestably abstract paintings since 1913, though these were not done in flat planes. It is also certain that Van der Leek practiced pure abstraction for only a short time. Finally, it is equally certain that in 1916, Doesburg and Vilmos Huszar did some abstract stained glass windows in a pure horizontal-and-vertical geometry. But was it Van der Leek who gave the initial push? I leave the question open. Like many another, it will probably never be satisfactorily answered.

Vilmos Huszar was a young painter from Hungary. He joined Doesburg and Mondrian. Other members of the first *De Stijl* group were: Georges Vantongerloo, a Belgian who was both a painter and a sculptor and who had been interned for the war at The Hague, but enjoyed considerable freedom; the poet Antonie Kok; and the architects Oud, Van’t Hoff, and Wils.

It seems worth while to translate in full the introduction to the first issue. Though signed *The Editors*, the style suggests that it was written by Doesburg:

Composition No.7 (Façade) – Komposition Nr.7 (Fassade) ►
Composition No.7 (façade) (1914)



MONDRIAN. 1914

The purpose of this little magazine is to contribute to the development of a new aesthetic awareness. It strives to open the mind of modern man to new developments in the visual arts. As against the prevailing archaic muddle – the “modern Baroque” – it proposes to state the logical principles of a style now ripening, based on the pure equivalence of the spirit of the age and of the means of expression. It will bring together the currents of contemporary thought pertinent to the arts, currents which, though essentially similar, have developed independently of each other.

The editors will try to achieve their goal by giving the floor to the *authentically* modern artist, who can contribute to the reform of aesthetic sensibility and to the emergence of plastic consciousness. Wherever the public lags behind art, it is the task of the professional to awaken aesthetic sensibility among laymen. The authentically modern artist, fully conscious of what he is about, has a double mission. First, to produce the plastically pure work of art: then to make the public capable of experiencing this pure art. This is why the creation of a “little magazine” became urgent. And all the more so since official criticism was singularly indifferent to the task of informing the public about abstract art. The editors will invite the technicians themselves to replace the critics who failed in their duty.

Our magazine will thus bring about a closer contact between the artist and the public, as well as between the artists themselves, in the various fields of art. Once the artist speaks out, the prejudice that the modern artist follows preconceived ideas will be dispelled. On the contrary, it will be seen that the new work of art is not the product of *a priori* theories, but that its principles flow from art itself.

Thus we wish to pave the way for a deeper art culture, based on collective realization of the new plastic awareness. When the artists in the different branches of art recognize the principle of their basic equality and of a universal plastic language, they will no longer remain timorously attached to their individualism. They will go beyond this individualism and seek to serve the universal principle. And, in serving it, they will most naturally achieve an organic style. For the diffusion of beauty it is a spiritual rather than a social community that is needed. But a spiritual community cannot be achieved without renouncing an individualism which is in quest of honors.

It is only by the logical and precise application of this principle, that plastic beauty can, through the new relations between the artist and the world, reveal itself as a style in everything that exists.

This, simply, was the point of departure of *De Stijl*, which had such repercussions all over Europe.

The extent of its influence on architecture has perhaps been exaggerated. Clearly, certain ideas (“a house is a machine to live in”) were in the air: they emerged everywhere at once, since they were natural products of the times. It is nevertheless true that certain of these ideas crystallized in *De Stijl*. Of all the avant-garde magazines which appeared during that period (1917–28), *De Stijl* was the most enterprising and the most lively, thanks to Doesburg’s aggressiveness. It was also, above all, the most intellectually thorough, thanks to Mondrian’s contribution. His important essays, which the magazine published during its first three years,

Note 15

not only formed the most rigorously thought-out theory of all the abstract art movements in the world, but were also the very soul, the throbbing soul, at the center of the hard core of theory. It is my conviction that they will remain forever the solid foundation of all abstract art: whether one likes it or not, this is the beginning, as Plato is in philosophy. You must start with it even if you have to contradict it later on.

Natural Reality and Abstract Reality is the longest and most lyrical of these essays. It is also the only one which Mondrian continued to like. In a letter to Slijper, he expressed the hope that it would be republished some day. That is why I am appending it at the end of this study. I think, too, that Mondrian's article in the first issue of *De Stijl* is of very great interest, especially since it was intended as a resume of all the points the author analyzed in the following issues. Here it is, almost in its entirety:

First Article

The cultivated man of today is gradually turning away from natural things, and his life is becoming more and more abstract.

Natural (external) things become more and more automatic, and we observe that our vital attention fastens more and more on internal things. The life of the truly modern man is neither purely materialistic nor purely emotional. It manifests itself rather as a more autonomous life of the human mind becoming conscious of itself.

Modern man – although a unity of body, mind, and soul – exhibits a changed consciousness: every expression of his life has today a different aspect, that is, an aspect more positively abstract.

It is the same with art. Art will become the product of another duality in man: the product of a cultivated externality and of an inwardness deepened and more conscious. As a pure representation of the human mind, art will express itself in an aesthetically purified, that is to say, abstract form.

The truly modern artist is aware of abstraction in an emotion of beauty; he is conscious of the fact that the emotion of beauty is cosmic, universal. This conscious recognition has for its corollary an abstract plasticism, for man adheres only to what is universal.

The new plastic idea cannot, therefore, take the form of a natural or concrete representation, although the latter does always indicate the universal to a degree, or at least conceals it within. This new plastic idea will ignore the particulars of appearance, that is to say, natural form and color. On the contrary, it should find its expression in the abstraction of form and color, that is to say, in the straight line and the clearly defined primary color.

These universal means of expression were discovered in modern painting by a logical and gradual progress toward ever more abstract form and color. Once the solution was discovered, there followed the exact representation of relations alone, that is to say, of the essential and fundamental element in any plastic emotion of the beautiful.

The new plastic idea thus correctly represents actual aesthetic relationships. To the modern artist, it is a natural consequence of all the plastic ideas of the past. This is particularly true of painting, which is the art least bound to contingencies. The picture can be a pure reflection of life in its deepest essence.

However, new plasticism is pure painting: the means of expression still are form and color, though these are completely interiorized; the straight line and flat color remain purely pictorial means of expression.

Although each art uses its own means of expression, all of them, as a result of the progressive cultivation of the mind, tend to represent balanced relations with ever greater exactness. The balanced relation is the purest representation of universality, of the harmony and unity which are inherent characteristics of the mind.

If, then, we focus our attention on the balanced relation, we shall be able to see unity in natural things. However, there it appears under a veil. But even though we never find unity expressed exactly, we can unify every representation. In other words, the exact representation of unity can be expressed; it must be expressed, for it is not visible in concrete reality.

We find that in nature all relations are dominated by a single primordial relation, which is defined by the opposition of two extremes. Abstract plasticism represents this primordial relation in a precise manner by means of the two positions which form the right angle. This positional relation is the most balanced of all, since it expresses in a perfect harmony the relation between two extremes, and contains all other relations.

If we conceive these two extremes as manifestations of interiority and exteriority, we will find that in the new plasticism the tie uniting mind and life is not broken; thus, far from considering it a negation of truly living life, we shall see a reconciliation of the matter-mind dualism.

If we realize through contemplation that the existence of anything is defined for us aesthetically by relations of equivalence, this is possible because the idea of this manifestation of unity is potential in our consciousness. For the latter is a particular instance of the universal consciousness, which is one.

If human consciousness is growing from the indeterminate towards the positive and the determinate, unity in man will also grow towards the positive and determinate.

If unity is contemplated in a precise and definite way, attention will be directed solely towards the universal, and as a consequence, the particular will disappear from art – as painting has already shown. For the universal cannot be expressed purely so long as the particular obstructs the path. Only when this is no longer the case can the universal consciousness (intuition, that is), which is at the origin of all art, be rendered directly, giving birth to a purified art expression.

This, however, cannot appear before its proper time. For it is the spirit of the times that determines artistic expression, which, in turn, reflects the spirit of the times. But at the present moment, that form of art alone is truly alive which expresses our present – or future – consciousness.

Composition allows the artist the greatest possible freedom, so that his subjectivity can express itself, to a certain degree, for as long as needed.

The rhythm of relations of color and size makes the absolute appear in the relativity of time and space.

In terms of composition the new plasticism is dualistic. Through the exact reconstruction of cosmic relations it is a direct expression of the universal; by its rhythm, by the material reality of its plastic form, it expresses the artist's individual subjectivity.

It thus unfolds before us a whole world of universal beauty without thereby renouncing the human element.

Art and Metaphysics

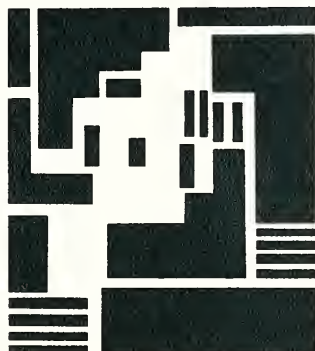
It may be said with some justification that this text is somewhat abstruse. In fact, Mondrian was a man for whom speculation was as natural as breathing. To live, for him, meant to measure the absolute, to try to weigh the imponderable. But he had to arrive at a radical solution at once; he was alien to any kind of skepticism. He had a solid faith in the purposefulness of creation. He started from a sure foundation, which implied, in its very premises, its supreme conclusion. Is this, then, metaphysical painting? Why not? Does not all great painting, all great art in fact, have some relation to metaphysics? Who will deny that metaphysics presides over the niches of the Sistine ceiling? That Rembrandt's masterpiece, *Christ at Emmaus* in the Louvre, is drenched with metaphysics—of course, with Rembrandt's metaphysics? That Byzantine art, Romanesque painting, Gothic sculpture, the stained glass of Chartres, the works of El Greco, have close ties with metaphysics? Mondrian merely picked up the thread of the great tradition, the tradition of the "whole man" who thought not only with his hands, but also with his head, and who looked about not only with eyes of flesh, but also with the eyes of the mind; of the man who not only fashioned admirable works of art, but also created utopias ("a god-making machine," Bergson says), and who expressed himself wholly in his work.

Every man is born to be universal, and those who think that painting only requires that one use one's brush and not one's head are lazy or timorous spirits who would reduce man to less than what he really is. Even the most impulsive of us has to use his reason if he wants to be authentically human. Witness the letters of Vincent van Gogh.

Mondrian's art, whatever ill-informed people think about it, was not an engineer's but a humanist's. He disavowed the conception of the painter's painter (*homo faber*) of a materialistic century, to restore to honor the complete man, body and mind (*homo intellectualis*). That is why some of his paintings move us so strangely, though we cannot account for our emotion in a way that would not cause the Philistine to laugh. This shows once more that art is a mysterious domain in which all criticism, however fair, becomes impossible. The aesthetic emotion is an absolute which, ipso facto, implies the existence of the absolute pure and simple. When I look at a Neo-Plastic painting by Mondrian, my mind comes to a stop, I shed all everyday concerns, my thought calmly enters a new realm where everything is noble, true, self-evident. For any contemplative mind this art is a marvelous, transcendent realm.

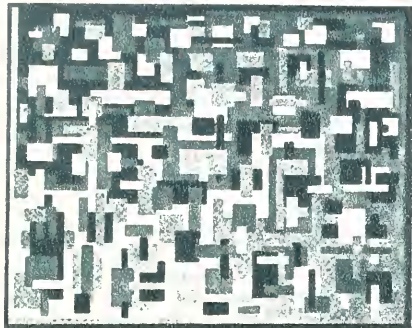
However surprising it may seem, the absolute is better expressed in pure plasticism than in words. Words are subject to the dictionary, and dictionaries are never more than collections of chance para-

DE STIJL



MAANDBLAD GEWIJD AAN
DE MODERNE BEELDENDEN
VAKKEN EN KULTUUR
RED. THEO VAN DOESBURG.

26 en 27. — Belangrijk voor de ontwikkeling uit de vroegere schilderkunst naar de nieuwe (vlakke) beeldingswijze, is het deze twee werken met elkaar en de Compositie III (stad) met Severini's Boulevard te vergelijken. In 26 treft ons een samensmelting van kubisme en luminisme. Het licht, dat zich geleidelijk uit het donker van den achtergrond ontwikkelt, doet ook door de atmosferische geslurderheid, de beelding nog eenigzins in vaagheid verschuip-



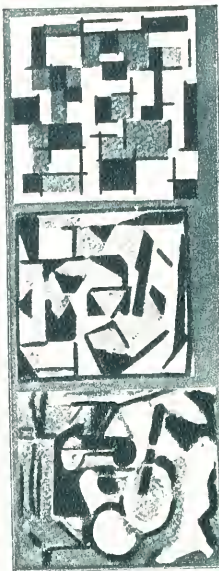
27. Vilmos Huszar. Compositie III (Stad) 1917

nen. Hoewel de vormen in hun onderlinge samenhang en wisselwerking en de rotatorische beweging om de perpendiculaire as constant in evenwicht blijven, heerscht in de gehele conceptie nog natuurlijk-organische gebondenheid, waarbij valt op te merken, dat de plastiek nog min of meer op de wijze der natuur verschijnt.

In 27 daarentegen heeft de vaagheid plaats gemaakt voor meerdere bepaaldheid der rechthoekige vlakken, die ondanks de dwingend-rhythmische beweging, meer op de wijze der

kunst (d. i. door onderlinge verhouding) in evenwicht zijn. De organische geslotenheid heeft plaats gemaakt voor het „opene“, „losse“ en „vlakke“, hetgeen zuiver modern is en

waardoor het karakter van het door-ikaar van het woelige stadsbeeld met zijn wisselende perspectieven op abstracte wijze tot beeldende uitdrukking (men vergelijkte „De Boulevard“ van Severini) komt.



28. Th. van Doesburg. Drie beeldingsmomenten van een compositie 9

28. — Mh. 28 geeft in 1, 5 en 9 drie beeldingsmomenten van een moderne schilderij te zien. Hoewel tusschen 1 en 5 en tusschen 5 en 9 nog drie stadia liggen kan het tot het zien der nieuwe beeldingswijze nuttig zijn deze drie beeldingsmomenten met elkaar te vergelijken. Deze verhouden zich tot elkaar als impressie, expressie en beelding.

1 geeft een studie te zien naar het plaatselijk geval, dat tot de compositie (9) aanleiding gaf. Hoewel in de eerste schets (impressie) het accent gelegd is op beeldende verhoudingen (horizontaal tegenover verticaal, verticaal tegenover schuin, schuin tegenover rond enz.) en het zakelijke-materiele der voor-

Two pages from Van Doesburg's "Three Discourses on New Plastic Art" (published in 1919)

Zwei Seiten van van Doesburgs «Drei Vorträge über die Neue Plastik» (veröffentlicht 1919)

Deux pages de van Doesburg «Trois conférences sur l'art plastique nouveau» (publié en 1919)

DE STIJL

ZESDE JAARGANG 1923

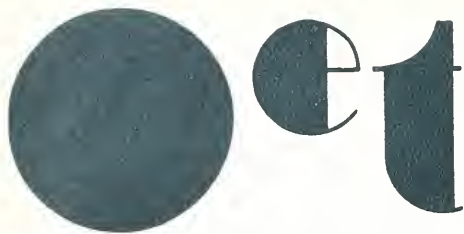
2

WEIMAR

HAAG ANTWERPEN PARIJS ROME

INTERNATIONAAL MAANDBLAD
VOOR NIEUWE KUNST WETEN-
SCHAP EN KULTUUR REDACTIE
THEO VAN DOESBURG

Van Doesburg: Design on Jacket of "De Stijl", since 1923 – Umschlagzeichnung für «De Stijl», seit 1923
Dessin pour la couverture de «De Stijl», à partir de 1923



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L'ART RÉALISTE ET L'ART SUPERRÉALISTE (LA MORPHOPLASTIQUE ET LA NÉOPLASTIQUE)

La Néoplastique, peinture des rapports par la ligne et la couleur seules, c'est-à-dire sans aucune forme limitée ni représentation particulière, est-elle encore « de la peinture » ? Ou n'est-elle que de la peinture décorative ? Elle n'est certainement pas de la peinture pittoresque ou traditionnelle. Si dans et par la ligne et la couleur toute expression plastique possible n'est pas atteinte, elle n'est que de la peinture décorative. Mais si, au contraire, elle a réussi à obéir à la loi principale de la peinture, qui n'exige que l'expression des rapports par la ligne et la couleur, elle est non seulement de la peinture, mais de la vraie peinture, celle qui n'a pas recours à la forme limitée, qui affaiblit l'expression purement plastique.

Tout vrai artiste a toujours été inconsciemment ému par la beauté de la ligne et de la couleur et des rapports de celles-ci pour elles-mêmes non par ce qu'elles pourraient représenter. On a toujours tâché d'exprimer toute force et toute richesse vitale par ces moyens seuls. Néanmoins, consciemment on s'est suivi la forme. Consciemment on a cherché à exprimer la sensation corporelle de celle-ci par modelé et techné. Mais inconsciemment on s'est exprimé en plans, on a augmenté la tension de la ligne, purifié la couleur. Ainsi, la culture de la peinture a mené cette dernière, tout doucement pendant des siècles, à l'abolition totale de la forme limitée et de la représentation particulière. De sorte que, de nos jours, l'art est délivré de tout ce qui l'empêchait d'être vraiment plastique. Cette délivrance est de la plus grande importance pour l'art, qui a la mission de vaincre l'expression individuelle et de montrer — tant que possible — l'expression universelle de la vie qui est au-dessus du tragique. Chaque expression d'art a ses propres lois qui s'accordent avec la loi principale de l'art et de la vie : celle de l'équilibre. De ces lois dépend à quel degré l'équilibre est réalisé et donc aussi à quel point de déséquilibre (l'expression tragique) est atteint. Cela nous est clair si nous comparons les différentes expressions de l'art du passé et d'aujourd'hui. Toutes ont tâché d'exprimer l'équilibre mais de façon toujours différente — même en cherchant et en créant une expression tragique. L'aspiration vers l'équilibre et celle vers le déséquilibre s'entre-opposent continuellement en nous. Ce tragique n'est qu'une culture-vers-l'équilibre qui s'avance à mesure que nous sentons l'oppression du tragique, — oppression causée par les deux polarités de la vie et le désir de nous en délivrer. L'oppression de ce tragique — un sentiment de souffrance sans fin, nous le subissons à l'aube : émotion éprouvée par tout artiste et, en peinture, exprimée par le peintre paysagiste.

À l'aube, la nuit domine encore. La lumière faible essaye de la vaincre, on sent l'oppression du déséquilibre nuit-jour, clair-obscur. C'est l'aspiration vers l'équilibre. L'espoir-désespoir, l'absence de certitude. C'est l'attente du plein-jour. Plein-jour : unité par équivalence de clarté et d'ombre. La nuit : le passé. Plein-jour : l'avenir — l'homme et la nature unifiés. Le présent : l'aube, la fin de la nuit, l'aube — l'évolution. Toutefois, la nuit est quelquefois éclaircie par la lumière blafarde de la lune, reflet de la lumière du jour. Quelquefois même au point d'atteindre une harmonie féérique. Et c'est ainsi que nous devons comprendre les belles œuvres classiques du passé : comme autant de choses créées dans la lumière harmonieuse de pleine-lune. Leur création n'est pas possible dans la lumière du grand-jour. Que de telles œuvres puissent encore être produites aujourd'hui, à l'aube, c'est à cause du reflet de la nuit et que la conception du grand jour n'est pas encore claire. Mais, comme la lumière artificielle vainc de plus en plus la nuit, l'homme du grand-jour

la vaincra. La nuit — non représentable et sans expression plastique. Le jour : non représentable avec une expression plastique inexacte, confuse. Nuit-jour, nature, non représentable et avec une expression plastique inexacte, comment, en art, la suivre afin d'aboutir à une expression exacte, claire, qui exprime notre sensation et notre conception du grand-jour ? Ne tâchons pas de la reproduire. Créons.

En art, créez une expression plastique en opposition avec la forme de l'unité apparente nuit-jour. Car les formes variées elles-mêmes réalisent le tragique (le déséquilibre) que le grand jour palpable vainement tâche de vaincre et ne réussit qu'à neutraliser. La réalité de la forme, même au grand-jour, n'est pas réelle pour nous qui vivons dans un grand-jour de notre conception et d'un équilibre exact. Aucune forme même créée par l'homme ne réalise le vrai contenu du grand-jour, cet équilibre absolu. Sa réalisation la plus approximative, l'homme seulement la peut attendre en créant une superréalité des rapports.

Aujourd'hui à l'aube, vivons déjà par l'esprit au grand jour qui approche. À la fin de l'aube notre conception du grand-jour n'est plus un idéal spéculatif. Car la lumière, assez forte déjà, la réalise. Faisons déjà le travail du grand-jour — fortifiés par le sommeil du passé, rassasiés du tragique de l'aube. Attendons ainsi le grand-jour — l'avenir. Attendons notre maturité.

Mais pour l'attendre, il faut l'aimer. Et pour aimer le grand-jour, il faut avoir aimé la nuit, avoir bien connu l'aube et les aimer encore — pour dépasser le tragique il faut avoir vécu longtemps. C'est alors que l'on apprend que la vie naturelle est une répétition continue de nuit-jour, vie-mort (le tragique), et que la vie de « l'homme » n'est qu'une évolution vers l'équilibre de sa dualité. Il est évident que cet équilibre n'est pas celui d'un vieux monsieur dans un fauteuil ou celui de deux sacs de pommes de terre égaux sur la balance. Au contraire, l'équilibre par équivalence exclut la similitude et la symétrie, ainsi que le repos dans le sens de l'immobilité.

Dans la nature, une délivrance réelle du tragique n'est pas possible. Et dans la vie, la forme physique restant toujours non seulement nécessaire mais étant de la plus grande importance, l'équilibre sera toujours très relatif. Mais l'homme évoluant vers l'équilibre de sa dualité, créera de plus en plus (aussi dans la vie) des rapports équivalents, donc l'équilibre. La vie sociale et économique d'aujourd'hui montre déjà des efforts vers un équilibre exact. Notre existence matérielle ne sera pas toujours menacée et tragique par le déséquilibre matériel-moral de la vie sociale. Et notre vie morale ne sera pas toujours entravée par l'oppression et la domination de la vie matérielle. La science réussit de plus en plus à main-



phrases, shaded interpretations, perpetually changing. But red is red for everybody, and white is incontestably and definitively the opposite of black. Here, then, we have a true axiom: red is red, black is black, a right angle is an irreducible opposition of two movements, and four right angles joined together form a cross, which is the perfect equilibrium of various movements canceling each other.

It is precisely by means of the cross, which he represents asymmetrically, and by means of the dynamic equilibrium of this asymmetry, that the art of Mondrian conquers the absolute.

My bibliography contains a complete list of the essays and articles Mondrian published in *De Stijl*. The last of these articles appeared in No. 6-7 of the year 1924. Mondrian, having decided that Doesburg was no longer faithful to the Neo-Plastic principles because he used the diagonal in his works, withdrew from the magazine. "After your arbitrary correction of Neo-Plasticism," he wrote Doesburg, "any collaboration, of no matter what kind, has become impossible for me. I regret that I cannot prevent publication of my photos and articles in the current numbers of *De Stijl*. Beyond that, no hard feelings."

I met Doesburg at Antwerp in 1921. He had come there to lecture and created a sensation; he was dressed in black, never laughed, and was accompanied by two pretty women. I often saw him again in Paris – in 1925 and the following years. He was a strange man, with a narrow face, a keen eye, and much aggressiveness; there was in him something both of the bird of prey and the parrot. It was hard not to get embroiled with him even in casual conversation; he was naturally quarrelsome. And then he would spit venom, carried away by his own words. Next day everything would be forgotten, as if it had never been (Doesburg did not bear grudges); but soon the same tempest would start up on some other occasion, and with the same vehemence. In 1921, after a stay at Weimar, Doesburg boasted of having "completely upset" the famous Bauhaus. He evidently made deadly enemies (Kandinsky, among others) – and at the same time he did some good. In the spring of 1930, I received a long letter from him full of insults, a real torrent of insanities, on the subject of the magazine *Cercle et Carré* that I had just founded, and to which he refused to contribute. I showed the letter to Mondrian, who, in my presence, at once wrote Doesburg that he did not wish to see him any more. Doesburg died at Davos a year later, on March 7, 1931, on Mondrian's fifty-ninth birthday.

Van Doesburg

Note 16

The two relatively short periods of rapid progress (Paris, 1912–14, and Holland, 1914–19) were followed by a much longer period of slow development. It covered twenty years – from February, 1919, to September, 1938 – all of them spent in Paris.

After founding Neo-Plasticism, Mondrian explored it thoroughly and analyzed its various aspects; the subject proved inexhaustible. During this long Paris period, I often heard people talk of his “mental laziness,” “stupid obstinacy,” “incapacity to renew himself,” etc. I usually retorted that Mondrian always paints one and the same picture, but that this picture lies beyond the frontiers of art. I have come across the same idea in Slijper, who says that Mondrian “shows us how painting dies a natural death.” Painting has clearly shown since then that it is far from dead, and that “beyond the frontiers of art” is merely another theme, as are the *Dancers* of Degas, and the *Mont Sainte-Victoire* of Cézanne. A theme is a whole world. But it includes the mind of the artist, which may indeed extend beyond this world.

Frontiers of Art

Mondrian, exploring for such a long time the theme of the horizontal-vertical, proved that this theme had a reality of its own, that it was a universal principle, a source of both life and language. A few years later, his comrades on *De Stijl* went on another tack. He alone remained faithful to the fundamental idea. What for Huszar or Van der Leek was just an accident, was for him an ineluctable law. A law? A faith! However elementary or even over-simple the horizontal-vertical principle of pure Neo-Plasticism may be, it becomes an inexhaustible theme from the moment the artist invests it with an occult meaning. Moreover, such attachment to a single theme sharpens his attention, and preserves him from being diverted. Thus there is true wealth in a theme, even if it be the poorest and sketchiest. Those who believe that talent is demonstrated by variety prove nothing but their own restlessness, their instability of mind. A single theme is the hallmark of genius. Diffuseness is to genius what flirting is to marriage.

However, Mondrian's theme and his “single” picture were constantly evolving. One can say, roughly speaking, that some change appeared every three years. An expert might even detect changes year after year. Mondrian always moved toward an ideal perfection, he never paused, and the differences between one canvas and another, which might appear insignificant to the layman, were, for him, often a great step forward.

The last compositions in short horizontal and vertical lines – that final version of the theme of the sea and of scaffoldings – date from 1916 and 1917 (canvas in the Guggenheim Museum, 1916; canvas in the Kröller-Müller Museum, 1917). The first colored rectangles appeared in 1917, in the two little canvases previously referred to (also in the Kröller-Müller Museum). Little black lines were intermingled with and occasionally overlapped the small rectangles, which stood out against a white ground. Then the rectangles appeared alone, and, in 1918–19, only the lines, on a gray ground. These canvases in gray tones by Mondrian, and the first abstract stained-glass windows by Doesburg and by Huszar, sometimes recall the compositions in brick one frequently comes across in Holland in ordinary dwelling houses, in the tiling of interiors, even in the paving, often brick, too, of the streets. The Dutch masons always had a reputation for imaginative utilization of brick. There is surely more than a mere coincidence here. The rectilinear division of the surface by the use of brick is a purely Dutch phenomenon, whose plastic possibilities Mondrian, and the rest of the *De Stijl* group, grasped.

pp.155, 266, 267

In 1919 Mondrian created his first composition in lozenge form; he also painted two large canvases divided into regular checker squares (Slijper collection), one in gay colors, with light grays, the other in darker, almost russet tones.

p.157, C. C. 293

In 1919–20, the position of the lines again became asymmetrical. The pictures, at the same time, betray some hesitation in the use of colors, which are often strangely dull. There are green-yellows, milky blues, and uncertain orange tints.

C. C. 301–306

The real change occurred in 1921. The canvases of that year are all very remarkable. The grounds are variations of very pale, almost white, blues. The black lines, which are much more clearly drawn now, divide the surface into rectangles of varied sizes, and isolate the color planes, which tend to become rarer. At the same time, color is more pronounced. Mondrian will never return to the bizarre green-yellows of the previous year (e.g., the canvas in the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam), although he is still groping for a suitable red.

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
p.167

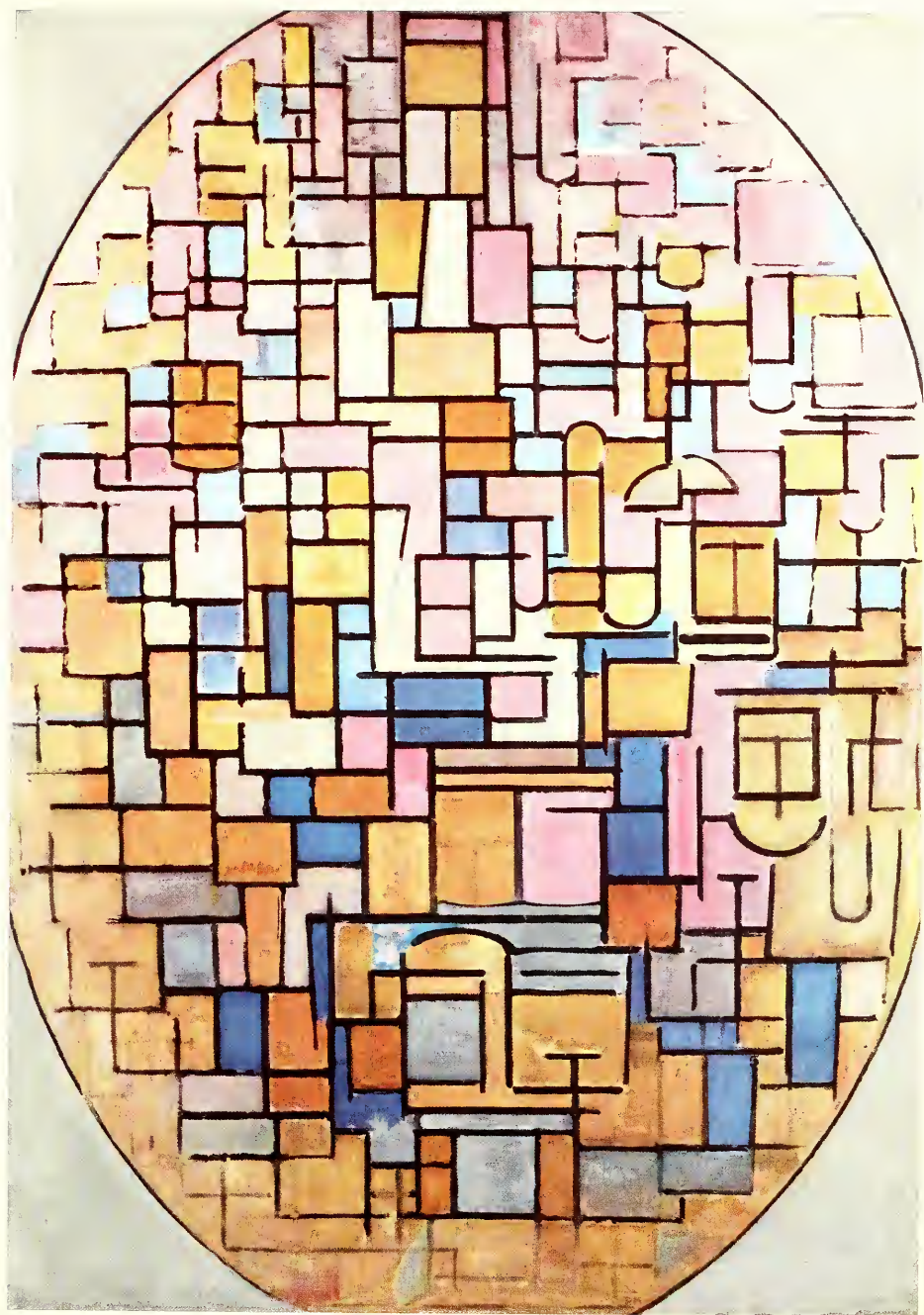
Tableau I p.165

In the following years, the composition became progressively more sober, and the red more brilliant. We have now subtle studies in which the lines run along the edges of the canvas, leaving the entire center bare. Henceforward, the ground will be uniformly white. In 1925, lines of different thickness appeared; then, in 1926, the color planes

Composition in a Square p.273

C. C. 338, 402

Oval Composition (Tableau III) – Komposition in Oval (Tableau III)
Composition ovale (Tableau III) (1914) ►



became larger (the canvas of that date is in the Senior collection). The first lozenge-shaped canvas without color also dates from 1926. It shows only four lines of different thickness on a white ground, and is now in the personal collection of Miss Katherine Dreier. Another lozenge-shaped canvas (Yale University collection) dating from 1927 has only three black lines. For the first time, Mondrian named a painting after a dance: *Fox Trot A*.

C. C. 405

Fox Trot A p.275

An undated, lozenge-shaped canvas, which I take to have been done in 1929, is composed of four yellow lines of varied thickness, which cut the four angles of the canvas irregularly, and which do not meet. It is in the Municipal Museum of The Hague. The following instructions, written in Dutch, in China ink, by Mondrian himself, appear on the back of the frame: "The canvas should be hung as a lozenge, with the point marked 'haut' at the top. Please do not touch the canvas, hold the painting by the frame. The picture is not to be inclined backward or forward when hung, all of it is to be kept at an equal distance from the wall, and its center should not be lower than the eye of a man standing – it would even be better if the lowest point of the canvas were kept at that height. P.M." This was the only work of Mondrian with non-black lines before his New York period.

C. C. 410

C. C. 405, 406

Composition with Two Lines p.287

Several other large, lozenge-shaped canvases with three or four black lines on a white ground date from that period; the last of the series is the painting of 1931, which is now in the City Hall of Hilversum, and which shows only two lines of different thickness intersecting at the edge of the canvas. This work is Mondrian's barest, and for this reason of exceptional significance. During the previous year, he painted a small canvas, also without color, made up of three black lines in normal, rectangular position (Senior collection).

C. C. 359

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
p.173

C. C. 349, 350

In the same period (1929–31), he painted a number of canvases in large, red rectangles. In some of these, the red spreads out over half the surface painted. A little blue and a little yellow are added to most of these compositions, to enhance the brilliance of the red (canvases of the Bartos collection, New York, and the Roth collection, Zurich). In the work of these years, Neo-Plasticism attains the height of its calm power and lyrical expressiveness. Many of these canvases are perfect squares (see Mondrian's own explanatory diagram).

C. C. 368

In 1932, something entirely new appeared: the double line (in the canvas with the large yellow and little gray lines, of the Müller

Composition: Bright Color Planes with Grey Lines
Komposition: Helle Farbflächen mit grauen Linien ►
Composition: Couleurs claires avec lignes grises (1919)



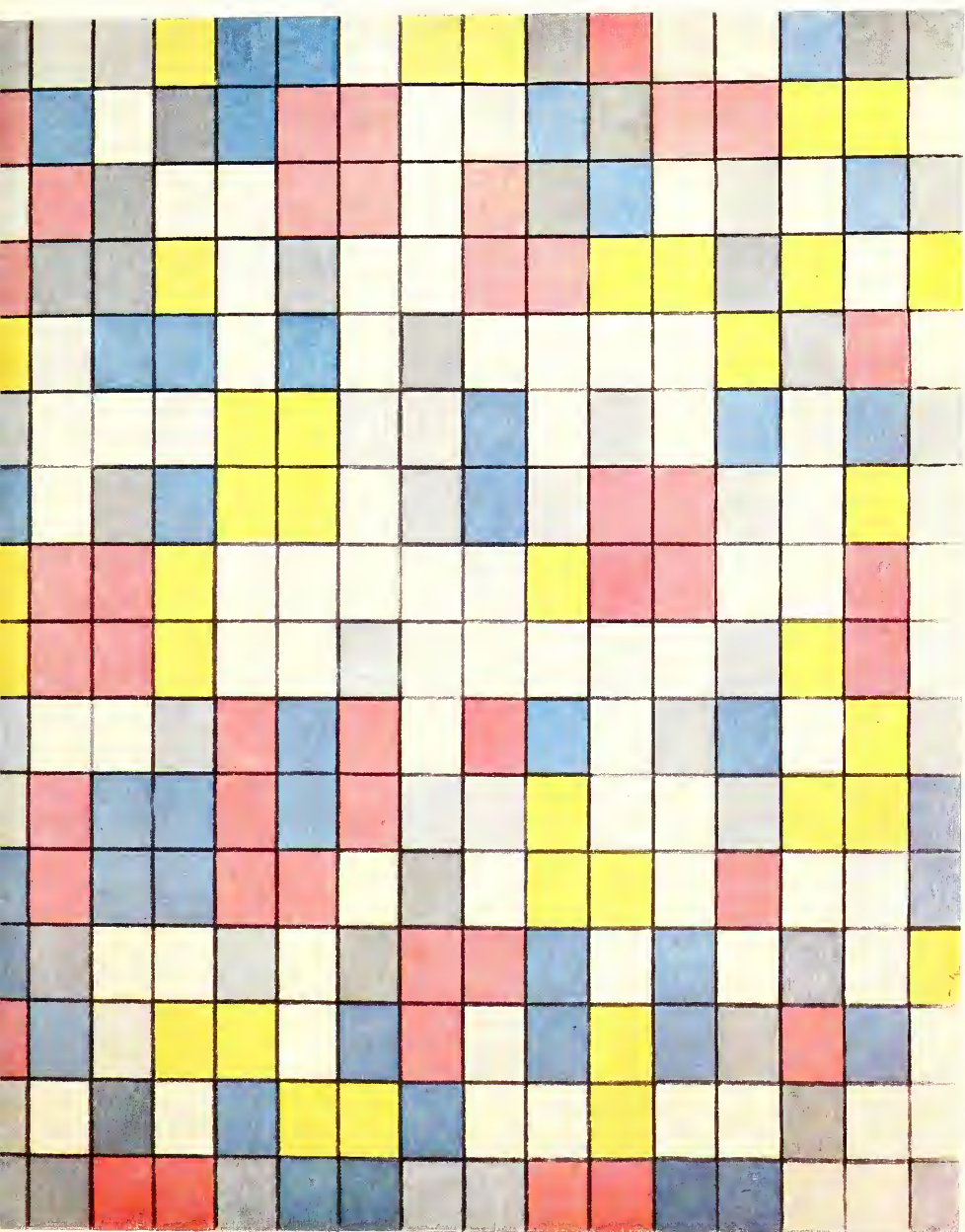
collection in Basel). In 1935, there was a still more surprising innovation: a vertical canvas with parallel lines running from top to bottom and crossing lines. Some canvases in this manner were not finished until 1942, when Mondrian was in New York. (Miller Company collection, Sweeney collection.)

The multiplication of crossed lines began in 1936. There is a canvas of that year with no less than thirteen black lines traversing the entire surface, with multiple crossing lines forming a kind of compact grill, and a single colored rectangle that enhances its threatening effect. We are a far cry from the near-empty space of the painting at Hilversum. Do these dramatic canvases suggest that Mondrian sensed the coming of the war, with all the miseries in its wake? Were the bars of so many prison cells prefigured in these canvases? Whatever the answer, several canvases of this period (1936–39) were finished, or rather felicitously lightened by color planes, in New York, in 1942 and 1943.

In the last works of this long Paris period, the thickness of the lines, which had varied several years before, especially in the horizontal canvases, tended to become uniform again.

In February, 1919, when Mondrian returned to Paris, *De Stijl* was publishing his big essays in monthly installments. For three years he did more writing than painting, and his main concern was to make his ideas known to the French. Since they could not read him in Dutch, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Neo-Plasticism*, which was printed at his expense, and which appeared in 1920 under the imprint of La Galerie l'Effort Moderne, run by Léonce Rosenberg. I don't know who helped him edit this work, the style of which leaves much to be desired. But, instead of rendering it in good prose, the editor chose to warn the reader in a note that M. Mondrian's French was "a little peculiar." This was an error of judgment; as a result, the publication was practically unnoticed by the public, and even by the critics.

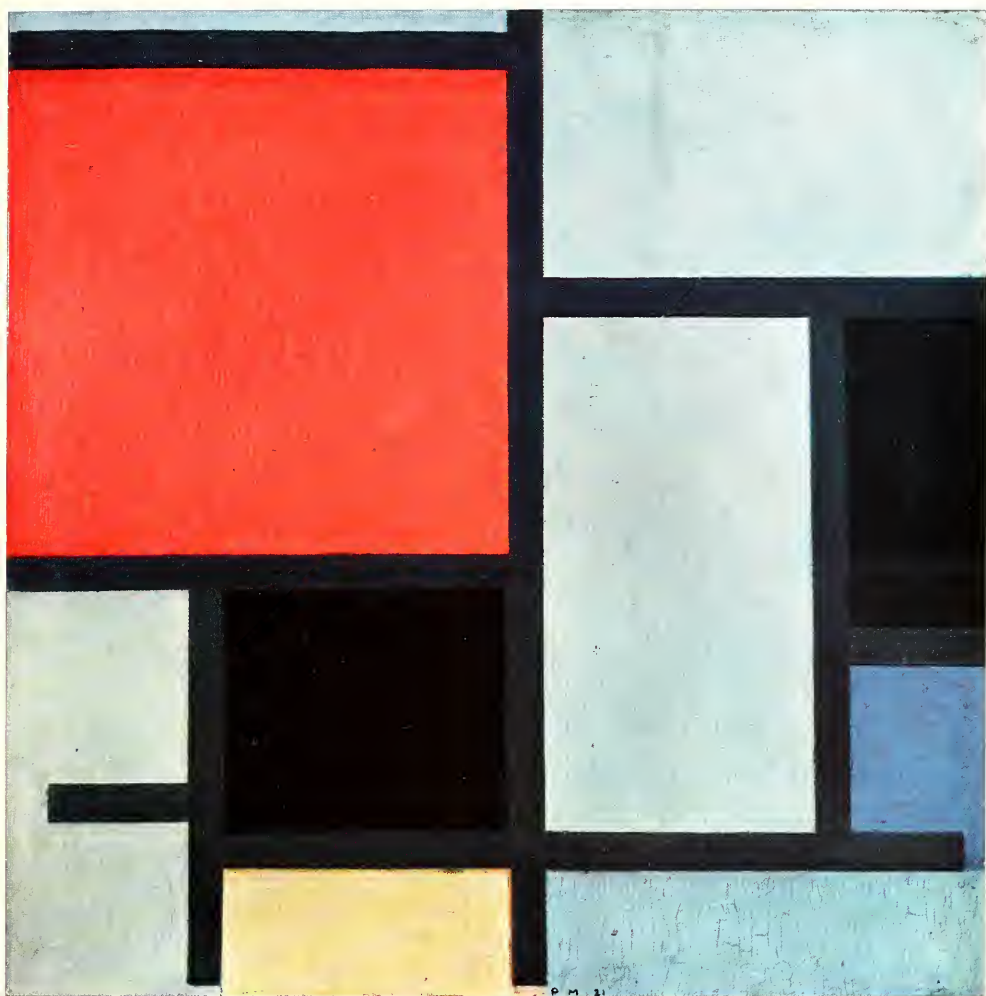
Mondrian then lived on the ground floor in a courtyard in the Rue de Coulmiers, a small thoroughfare along the embankment of the beltline railroad near the Porte d'Orléans. Several months after his return to Paris he had to vacate the studio in the Rue du Départ, for Conrad Kickert, who owned it, was coming back with his wife. But after 1921, he was able to leave his inadequate lodgings in the Rue de



Coulmiers and return to the same building in the Rue du Départ, where another studio had been vacated. Kickert's studio, on the first floor, had two windows opening on the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet, facing north. Mondrian's new studio, on the third floor, had a large window facing east, and overlooking the Rue du Départ, and a high colored glass window facing southwest, with a view of the railway tracks of the Gare Montparnasse. He lived there until the building was expropriated in 1936. Today, nothing remains of this whole block; only a small wooden structure, a government annex, stands on the vacant lot.

For me this empty space remains full of memories, and I can never pass it without emotion. How many times have I climbed the dark, winding, ill-smelling stairway up to the third floor! In the center of the brown, painted door was Mondrian's visiting card. Opposite the door, a dark hole: the water closet. Next to the door, a dirty window looked out on a sad courtyard with crumbling walls. This door opened into a small room, half bedroom and half kitchen. Near a window, which looked out on the yard, Mondrian kept his little gas burner, and all around, within arm's reach, were his cooking utensils and a few narrow shelves for supplies. But, as a rule, the visitor saw nothing of all this; a skillful use of curtains formed a corridor, which led him toward the studio; this he entered after climbing five or six steps in the dark. Then everything changed. The room was quite large, very bright, with a very high ceiling. Mondrian had divided it irregularly, utilizing for this purpose a large black-painted cupboard, which was partially hidden by an easel long out of service; the latter was covered with big gray and white pasteboards. Another easel rested against the large rear wall whose appearance changed often, for Mondrian applied to it his Neo-Plastic virtuosity. The second easel was completely white, and used only for showing finished canvases. The actual work was done on the table. It stood in front of the large window facing the Rue du Départ, and was covered with a canvas waxed white and nailed to the underside of the boards. I often surprised Mondrian there, armed with a ruler and ribbons of transparent paper, which he used for measuring. I never saw him with any other working tool. But, at the time, I hardly ever stayed, even when he insisted, for I was anxious not to interrupt his work. He had two large wicker armchairs, also painted white, and, on the scrupulously clean floor, two rugs, one red, the other gray. Such was the studio where Mondrian lived for thirteen years, where he received so many visitors,

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau ►
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1921)



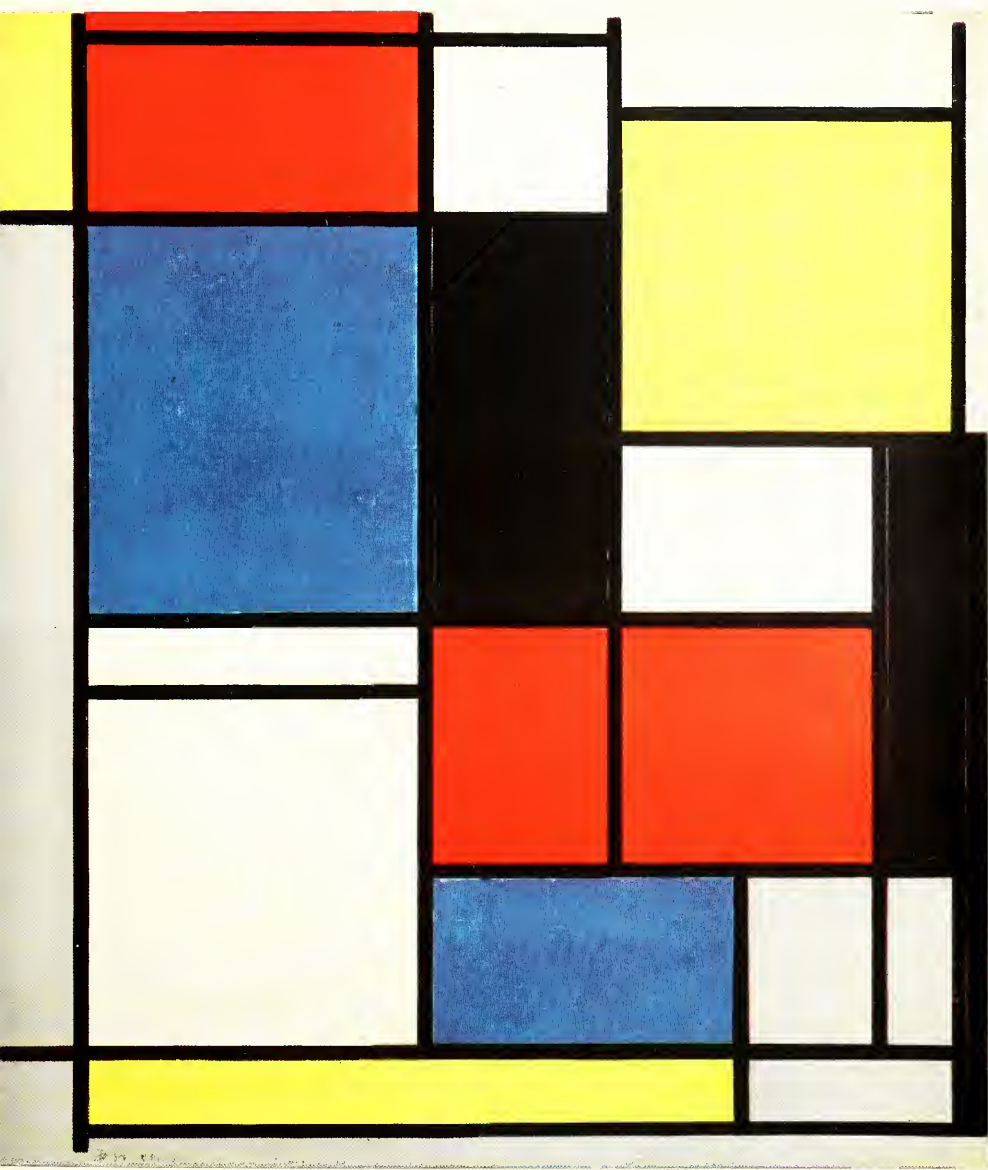
where he painted his most "classical" works, the ones most justly admired, and where he also suffered a great deal from solitude, illness, poverty.

Note 17 Lack of money was especially acute between 1920 and 1926. Though I often visited Mondrian during this period (I met him in April, 1923), he never hinted at his troubles. I learned about them later, from others.

Note 18 He had been very close to the painter and art dealer Simon Maris, son and pupil of Willem Maris, the youngest of the three brothers famous in Dutch painting at the beginning of the century. He had left almost all his Brabant and Zeeland works at The Hague, with Simon. They no longer meant anything to him, but their sale, at very low prices, had brought him a tiny income for several years. This source of income was now gone, and there were scarcely any collectors interested in the new plastic art. But as more and more collectors became interested in his former style, he consented to paint flowers for two or three years. His Dutch friends, particularly Mrs. Van Domselaer and Salomon Slijper sold them in Holland for about 30 (occasionally 40) florins each. In 1924, in the last article he published in *De Stijl*, Mondrian refers indirectly to this unexpected concession. "It is not easy for an artist to earn money by practicing another trade," he wrote. "Since the public which is able to buy is interested in naturalistic art only, the artist can meet this demand because his knowledge of his own craft enables him to produce such work in addition to what he looks upon as his real work." Thus, between 1922 and 1925, Mondrian painted, in watercolor, a large number of flowers (a single flower in each painting). But in 1925 he refused to do any more: it had become too painful to him, he wrote Slijper. I have seen some of these later paintings of flowers, and I found in them the same humility as in the ones he painted, or drew, in 1907, and the same delicacy.

I want to call attention to the fact that I never saw the slightest trace of a living flower in Mondrian's studio. But, in a round vase on a hall table close to the door, there was always the single artificial tulip I mentioned before. An artificial leaf which went with it was painted white by Mondrian to banish entirely from his studio any recollection of the green he found so intolerable.

Mondrian did not at all fit the description given by an American critic, who probably never saw him; he was not "a short, straight-backed,



dry little man." Rather tall, though not athletic, he gave an impression of robustness, despite delicate wrists and ankles. His very long hands were extraordinarily sensitive. At the time I knew him, he had a small, carefully trimmed mustache; this disappeared in 1927. Very reserved with strangers, shy with women, and easy to intimidate, he had the little crotchets of an old, dandyish bachelor. Not for anything in the world would he appear as an artist or Bohemian, like so many of the other inhabitants of his section of Montparnasse: he wanted to be considered a man about town, a bourgeois of Paris. His gestures and bearing had great distinction. Even more distinguished was the nobility of his character; and he was an extremely considerate friend. While his physical stance and moral behavior were those of an aristocrat, his subtly modulated voice showed exquisite sensibility. His speech was hesitant, somewhat grumbling, at times of a curious, childish sulkiness. His was the language of a soul exceedingly prudent and shy; his thought moved gropingly, as is proper in the treacherous world of words. This verbal indecision contrasted strangely with the clear bright atmosphere of his studio.

Description of Mondrian

Note 19

p. 27

In November, 1923, an exhibition of the *De Stijl* group was held at La Galerie L'Effort Moderne, Rue de la Baume. Léonce Rosenberg, the director of the Gallery, promised Mondrian to sell six of his canvases. The promise was not kept, for the exhibition was a failure. Mondrian's hope of being "recognized" in Paris was severely shaken. Greatly depressed, he talked of giving up painting for good, and becoming a waiter in a café. In a letter, written just prior to this event, Doesburg, who had just visited Paris, wrote to a friend in Holland: "In Paris everything is completely dead; Mondrian suffers a good deal from this, and I know that he would be in much better spirits if he would only realize that nothing new can grow in reactionary Latin soil. I am convinced that the new zone of culture is in the North." This, at the time, was a pet idea of Fernand Léger, too: he entitled one of his articles "The New Spirit Comes from the North." An idea we find controversial, in view of what has happened since then in the sphere of art – and of politics.

However this may be, it was in fact from abroad that the first real help came to Mondrian, and his first real success. In 1925, the Bauhaus, still in Weimar, published *Die Neue Gestaltung*, a German translation (much more readable than the French) of the pamphlet of 1920, and of several articles of Mondrian's which had appeared in *De Stijl* and in other magazines. The publication of this work consolidated his influence in Germany, especially with the Bauhaus circles, where Doesburg had smoothed the way.

The year 1926 was important in Mondrian's life. That year he was visited by Miss Katherine S. Dreier, who bought one of his large,

Katherine Dreier

lozenge-shaped canvases, which was exhibited that same year in Brooklyn, at the International Exhibition of the Société Anonyme. In the book published on the occasion, and which mentioned almost every representative of abstract art all over the world, the courageous organizer of the exhibition wrote: "Holland has produced three great painters who, though a logical expression of their own country, rose above it through the vigor of their personality – the first was Rembrandt, the second was Van Gogh, and the third is Mondrian. We realize Rembrandt's strong individuality when we compare him with his contemporaries, with men as great as Frans Hals. Similarly Van Gogh stands out in contrast to Mauve, Israëls, and the fine painters of his period. And now we have Mondrian, who, starting from that strongly individualistic expression, has attained a clarity that has never been achieved before him." These words, written in 1926, are a conclusive proof of perspicacity, and in my opinion their author deserves to be famous for them.

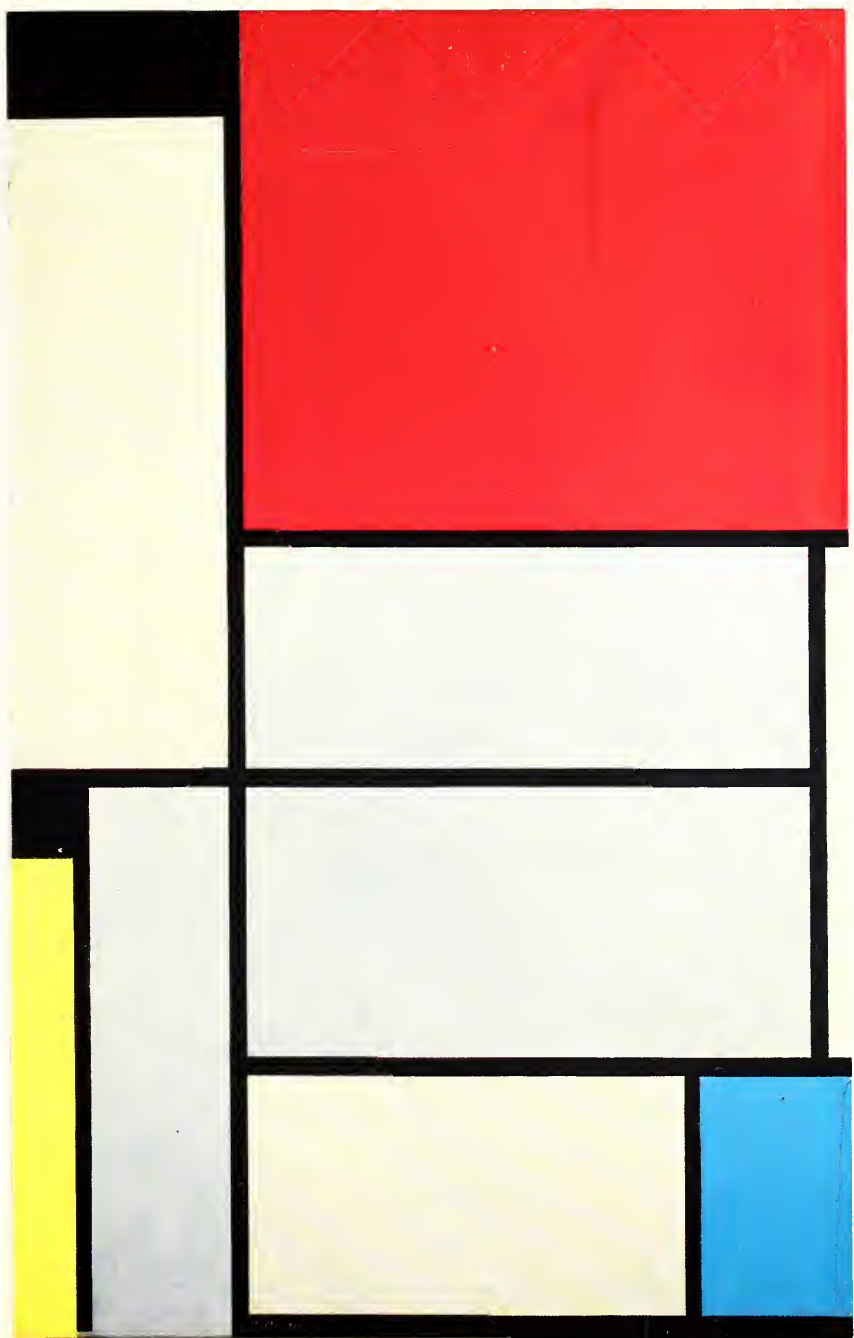
Katherine Dreier returned to Paris the following year, and again bought several canvases from Mondrian. Then the Germans came, and the Swiss, and also other Americans, like Mr. Gallatin, who had just founded the Museum of Living Art. But Mondrian sold his pictures at very low prices, and if his usual fare improved slightly, the day when he had to pay his quarterly rent always brought anxieties. However, the painter did enjoy happy days in Paris. He was surrounded by very solicitous friends (the Stieltjes and Hoyack families, for instance, the Vantongerloo, Dr. d'Eck and myself); he had many visitors from Holland, often well-to-do people who took him to good restaurants or fashionable dance halls. Early in 1930, in the Circle and Square group, which I had founded with Torrès-Garcia, and which had some eighty members, Mondrian was admired and venerated. His natural shyness and discretion notwithstanding, he was clearly the spiritual center of the group.

Note 20

Having fallen ill at the end of that year, I had to leave Paris during my convalescence, and the Circle and Square group disbanded. Several months later, when I returned to Paris, Vantongerloo and Herbin had formed the Abstraction-Creation Group, which included almost all the artists I had brought together in the Circle and Square. Here again Mondrian was the central figure: his very presence gave the group authority.

For several years, from 1925 on to be exact, I corrected his French, as later Harry Holtzman and Miss Charmion von Wiegand edi-

Tableau I (1921) ►



ted his English in New York. Mondrian often severely tried the patience of his helper. He had a phobia for certain words; when a given word had no adequate synonym, he argued for hours about the necessary paraphrases. Such linguistic excursions led us far afield: two or three sentences sometimes took a whole afternoon. His text was revised many times, and the results were far from satisfactory. The little essay he wrote with my help in 1926 for the magazine *Vouloir* (which did not publish it) is definitely an advance over the pamphlet of 1920. I think it is the best formulation of his fundamental ideas about Neo-Plasticism. It also has the merit of being brief. Here it is in its entirety, transcribed from his handwritten original:

Principles of Neo-Plasticism

I. General Principles of Neo-Plasticism.

1. The plastic medium should be the flat plane or the rectangular prism in primary colors (red, blue, and yellow) and in non-color (white, black, and gray). In architecture, empty space counts as non-color. The material can count as color.

2. There must be an equivalence of plastic means. Different in size and color, they should nevertheless have equal value. In general, equilibrium involves a large uncolored surface or an empty space, and a rather small colored surface or space filled with matter.

3. The duality of opposing elements in the plastic medium is also required in the composition.

4. Abiding equilibrium is achieved through opposition and is expressed by the straight line (limit of the plastic means) in its principal opposition, i. e., the right angle.

5. The equilibrium that neutralizes and annihilates the plastic means is achieved through the proportions within which the plastic means are placed, and which create the living rhythm.

6. All symmetry shall be excluded.

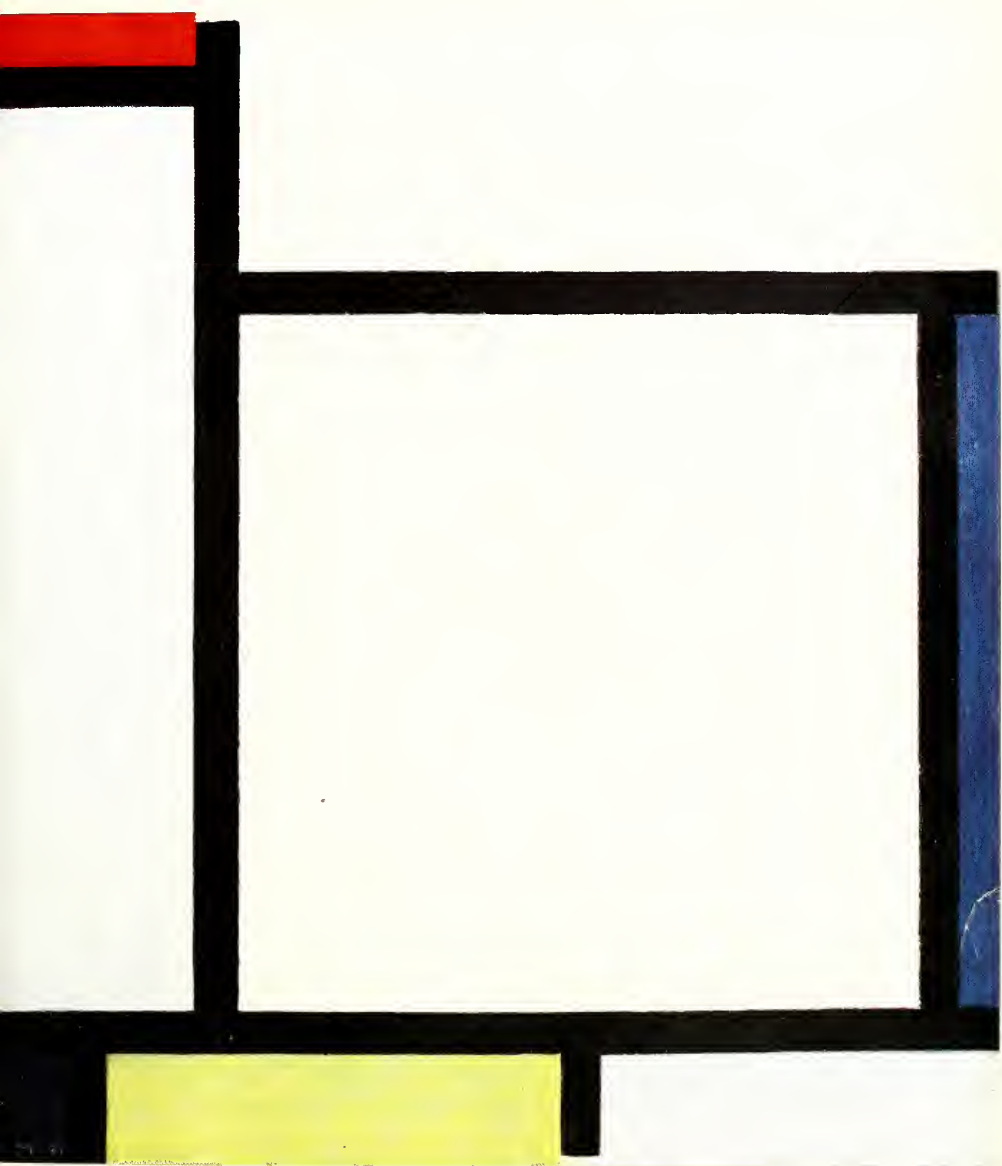
II. Neo-Plasticism and Form.

In nature, relations are veiled by matter appearing as form, color, or its natural properties. This "morphoplasticism" was unconsciously followed in the past by all the arts. Thus in the past, art was "after nature." For centuries painting plastically expressed relations through natural form and color until it came in our day to the plasticism of relations alone. For centuries, painters composed by means of natural form and color; at present the composition itself is the plastic expression, the image.

III. Neo-Plasticism and Color.

Despite its "interiorized" plastic expression, Neo-Plasticism still is painting. Its means of expression is pure and definite color, in planes which remain

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1921) ▶



equivalent to the surface of the picture; in other words, color remains flat on a flat surface. It is not weakened by having to follow the modulations of the form; thus it is stronger than in morphoplasticism. Color finds its equivalent opposition in non-color, that is, in white, black, and gray.

IV. Psychological and Social Consequences of Neo-Plasticism.

Balance through the equivalence of nature and mind, of that which is individual and that which is universal, of the feminine and the masculine – this general principle of Neo-Plasticism can be achieved not only in plastic art, but also in man and in society. In society, the equivalence of what relates to matter and of what relates to mind can create a harmony beyond anything hitherto known.

By the interiorization of what is known as matter, and by the externalization of what is known as mind – until now, the two have been kept pretty far apart! – mind-matter becomes a unity.

Neo-Plasticism demonstrates the exact order. It stands for equity, because the equivalence of the plastic means in the composition demonstrates that it is possible for each, despite differences, to have the same value as the others.

Equilibrium, through a contrasting and neutralizing opposition, annihilates individuals as particular personalities and thus creates the future society as a real unity.

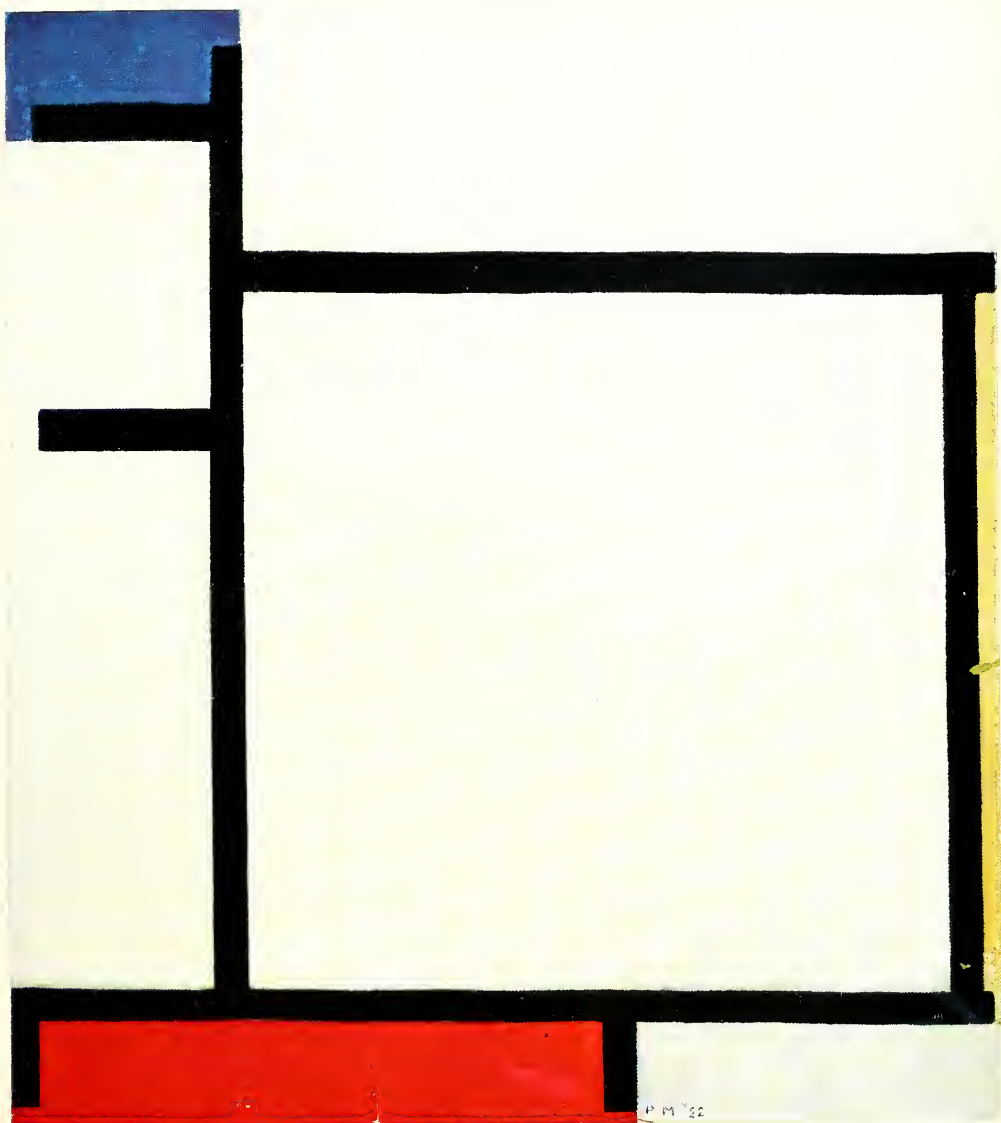
Three years later, in the first issue of *Cercle et Carré*, Mondrian wrote the following brief statement which rounds off the preceding article:

Not to concern oneself with form or color insofar as it is form, that is Neo-Plasticism in art. Not to be dominated by the physical-natural, that is the new mentality.

To be concerned exclusively with relations, while creating them and seeking their equilibrium in art and in life, that is the good work of today, that is to prepare the future.

Mondrian as Dancer

Dancing was Mondrian's favorite relaxation. His Dutch visitors knew this well. The way really to please him was to take him, after a good dinner, to a "distinguished" dance hall. I myself don't dance, and confess that it took me years to realize how serious he was about dancing. As late as 1930, the dances he at times performed in his studio, to the music of a little red-painted phonograph, were ridiculous spectacles to me. Whenever the Dutch visitors prevailed on me to go along to a night club, I would suffer all evening watching Mondrian dance. To me it seemed (I was certainly wrong) that he danced very badly, and I pitied the women who were his partners. He told me one day in 1932, that he was unable to attend a group meeting because he had to go to his dancing class that evening.



P M 22

I thought that he was at last really learning to dance. And he was sixty ! I learned much later that as early as 1916, in Laren, he had gone to dances every Sunday. "He would pick out the prettiest girl," Mr. Van Tussenbroeck, who knew him in that period, told me, "and would dance as stiff as a ramrod, his head in the air, and without saying a word to his partner."

In September, 1926, in the presence of the Parisian correspondent to the Amsterdam newspaper *De Telegraaf*, he bitterly criticized his native country for having prohibited the Charleston as an obscene type of dance. "How could they ban that sporting dance!" Mondrian exclaimed. "The dancers keep at a certain distance from each other, and spend so much energy in doing the steps that they hardly have time for thoughts of sex. If this ban remains in force, I will consider it a good enough reason for never again setting foot in that country."

In New York, when over 70, he continued to dance a good deal and was especially partial to the newest and most dynamic music (boogie-woogie) for which he named his last canvases.

Mrs. Stuart Davis, the American painter's wife, often had Mondrian as a partner at nightclubs. "He danced very well," she told me, "but he did steps too complicated for me to follow."

VIII

In 1934, two visits were paid Mondrian which were to have long-range effects. The first was from the English painter, Ben Nicholson, then forty; the second from a very young American, Harry Holtzman, then twenty-two years old.

In a letter written to a friend in 1944, Nicholson described his impressions after a first visit to the studio in the Rue de Départ: "I remember . . . sitting at a café table on the edge of a pavement almost touching all the traffic going in and out of the Gare Montparnasse, and sitting there for a very long time with an astonishing feeling of quiet and repose (!) – the thing I remembered most was the feeling of light in his [Mondrian's] room and the pauses and silences during and after he'd been talking. The feeling in his studio must have been not unlike the feeling in one of those hermits' caves where lions used to go to have thorns taken out of their paws." (John Summerson, *Ben Nicholson*, London, 1948.)

Nicholson returned the following summer and also, I believe in 1936, at which time Mondrian lived in a much less spacious studio on the first floor overlooking the courtyard of a tiny building at 278 Boulevard Raspail, halfway between the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet and the Place Denfert-Rochereau. Holtzman, who had come to Paris in December 1934 especially to see Mondrian, remained until March 1935. The following years were politically tense. Fascist Italy, Hitler Germany, Franco's Spain were becoming more threatening day by day. The French had begun to mobilize but were stopped by the other powers. Nazism was felt even in Paris. In 1938, when Holtzman's finances had improved, he thought of Mondrian and began to send him a sum of money every month under the pretext of buying paintings which he never accepted. This was about the time of the Munich pact. After Munich, Mondrian realized that war was imminent. Convinced that Paris would be an easy target for the German air force, and probably destroyed, he wrote Nicholson and Gabo that he was coming, and left for London on September 21, 1938, without thought of return.

Two Years in London

"I'm on my way to America," he said on his arrival. But he felt completely at his ease in London, and immediately went to work in the studio that Gabo and Nicholson had found for him next door to their own studios. With the help of Mrs. Gabo he bought some unpainted furniture from a wholesale dealer, and painted it white. "In his studio I was always dazzled", writes Nicholson, "it was so white". There was no longer any question of his going to America.

Then came the blitz. For it was not Paris that the German planes demolished, as Mondrian had predicted, but London. All his friends left, but he refused to give up his studio, although he was repeatedly urged to do so. But when, one day, all his window panes were smashed, and the house next to his reduced to rubble by a bomb, he began to listen more favorably to the offer of his young friend in New York to advance him the passage money.

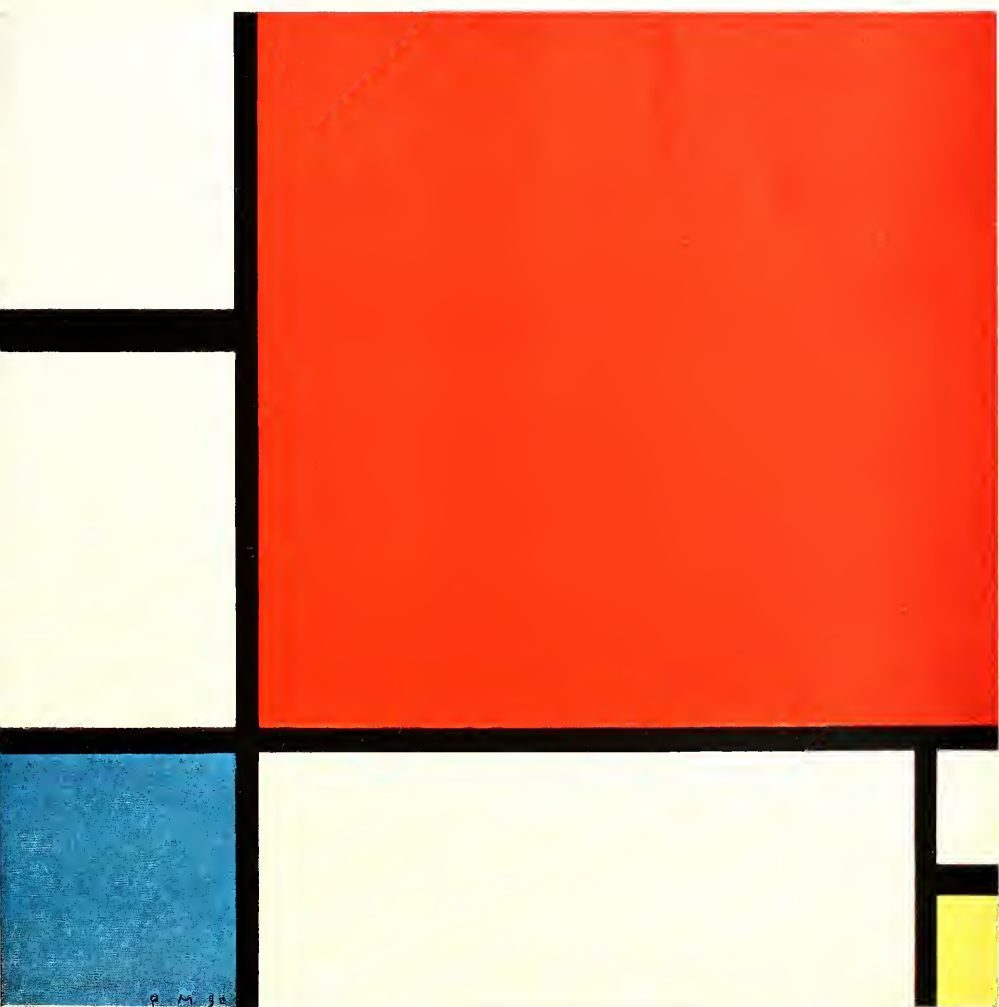
Mondrian had other friends besides Gabo, Ben Nicholson and Ben's wife, Barbara Hepworth. He seems to have been on good terms with the architect J. L. Martin and his wife. In her home, filled with Nicholson's canvases, Mrs. Martin spoke of Mondrian with the greatest admiration. To repay the Martins for their favors, he had, one day, brought them a small canvas, black lines on a white background, as usual, with one red and one gray plane. Since they knew he was very poor, they persuaded him, after much insistence, to accept a small sum in exchange.

Nicholson told me that he and Barbara Hepworth got several people in London to buy Mondrian canvases; even though he sold them at a low price, the proceeds were enough to live on.

He lodged at 60 Park Hill Road, Hampstead, a pleasant, open neighborhood, much healthier than the center of the city. One large room between the first and ground floors of a brick house, which opened on a garden, served as his home and studio. In the garden below the two windows of his room, was the studio of Ben Nicholson. A little further on was the studio of Barbara Hepworth. The building on the corner of Park Hill and Tasker Road, and right next to the house Mondrian lived in, was completely destroyed by a bomb. The vacant lot there is fenced off by a low wall, and from the street one can easily see the adjoining garden, and Nicholson's little studio. Mondrian lived above that studio for two years and painted there several important pictures, which were completed in New York.

The air raids on London tried Mondrian's nerves severely. Even after he had been more than a year in New York, the sirens of ambulances or fire engines reminded him of the alerts that were often followed at once by bomb explosions. His long hesitation about leaving London becomes almost incomprehensible when one recalls that he had wanted to go to New York since 1938. On September 7 of that year he wrote the following letter to Holtzman:

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau ►
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1930)



P. M. 31

Dear Holtzman,

You know that I always wanted to live in New York but I didn't dare risk it. Until now I could work peacefully in Paris. But now I will probably be chased from here when the war breaks out.

I would like to come to New York and rent a room, a studio would be too expensive. But to be able to enter America I must have an invitation from a friend and therefore I am asking you to invite me so that I can have the letter to show on entering.

In case this letter doesn't reach you, or you are not there at this time, I am asking the same favor of Kiesler and Xcéron.

Regards and best thoughts.

Mondrian

He embarked at the end of September, 1940, and arrived in New York on October 3. "He was very tired and weakened by the dangers and difficulties he had experienced," writes Holtzman, "but with rest, good food, and care, he soon recovered." A certain number of unfinished canvases, and older paintings were sent him a few weeks later. The man and his work were finally safe and sound on friendly soil, far from the battlefield.

7 Sept. '38
278 Bd Raspail

Cher Holtzman,

Vous savez que j'ai toujours voulu venir habiter New-York mais que je n'osais le risquer. Jusqu'ici je pouvais travailler tranquillement à Paris mais maintenant je serai probablement chassé d'ici quand la guerre va éclater.

Je voudrais venir à New-York et louer une chambre: un atelier sera trop cher.

Mais pour entrer en Amérique il me faut une invitation d'un ami là bas, et donc je viens vous demander de m'inviter puisque je prieuse mon-ten cette lettre en entrant.

Pour le cas que cette lettre s'égar-ou vous n'êtes pas là, j'ai demandé la même chose à Kiesler et à Kei-ron. Mes amitiés et meilleures

pensées
Mondrian

I was told that New York was an infernal city where one grew old prematurely – a city ruled by gangsters. This may be true, perhaps there is such a New York, but it is not the one I saw, the one I came to know, the city I made my own. On the contrary, I found it cordial and warm, much less hectic than Paris, full of amiable, generous, and often enthusiastic people, young in spirit.

Paris and New York are the two capitals of the West. The two cities have a secret affinity, which is difficult to define, but which I often felt in streets, in buses, in department stores, at openings of exhibitions: incontestably, Fifth Avenue is nearer to Paris than to London or Zurich. But New York is also the political capital of the new world, as Paris is the intellectual capital of the old. The whole difference is expressed by the words *new* and *old*, neither of which are pejorative. If "the old" normally gives meaning to "the new," "the new" in turn often illuminates "the old." What is in one case a field-marshal's baton may be used in the other as an old man's walking stick.

The Old and the New

Mondrian, as is well known, always frankly favored the *new*, because the new was on the march and was synonymous with life. His key term was *evolution*. I don't believe that he ever read Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, but in the little book by Krishnamurti which I mentioned before, noting that he kept it until his death, I find this echo of Bergsonism, dressed up in religious phrases: "The religion of a man and the race to which he belongs are things without importance; what is really important is to know God's plan with respect to man. Now God has a plan, and this plan is evolution. Once man has understood this plan and really knows it, he cannot help but work for its realization, identifying himself with it. Such is his glory and his beauty. Because he knows he is on the side of God, he can give himself utterly to the good, resisting evil, working for progress and not for his own interests." And the following could serve as an epigraph for Mondrian's whole life: "Be a force for evolution!"

Mondrian's idealism appears everywhere in his writings. *Neo-Plasticism*, the pamphlet of 1920, was dedicated to "the men of the future". In 1924 he wrote: "At each moment of the past all the variations of the old might have been called *new*. But this was never the new as such. For we must not forget that we are at a turning point in the history of culture, at the end of everything *old* in a global sense. The divorce between the old and the new is now absolute, definitive." (*Merz*, 8–9). And finally in 1942: "Because it is free of all utilitarian limitations,

plastic art must move not only parallel with human progress, but must advance ahead of it."

Unceasing Progress

To Mondrian New York represented the spearhead of this progress, of this unceasing evolution of the world. The extraordinary island, bristling with towers like a gigantic projection of San Gimignano, must have seemed to him like the very prow of the ship of civilization. He told a journalist who had asked him if he did not find the skyscrapers a little too tall: "No, not too tall, they are just right as they are." And I agree. I have never felt any sensation of vertigo or of being crushed by size, when in New York. The skyscrapers soon become familiar; in winter they smoke peacefully, and each night they transform the city into a fantastic feast of light.

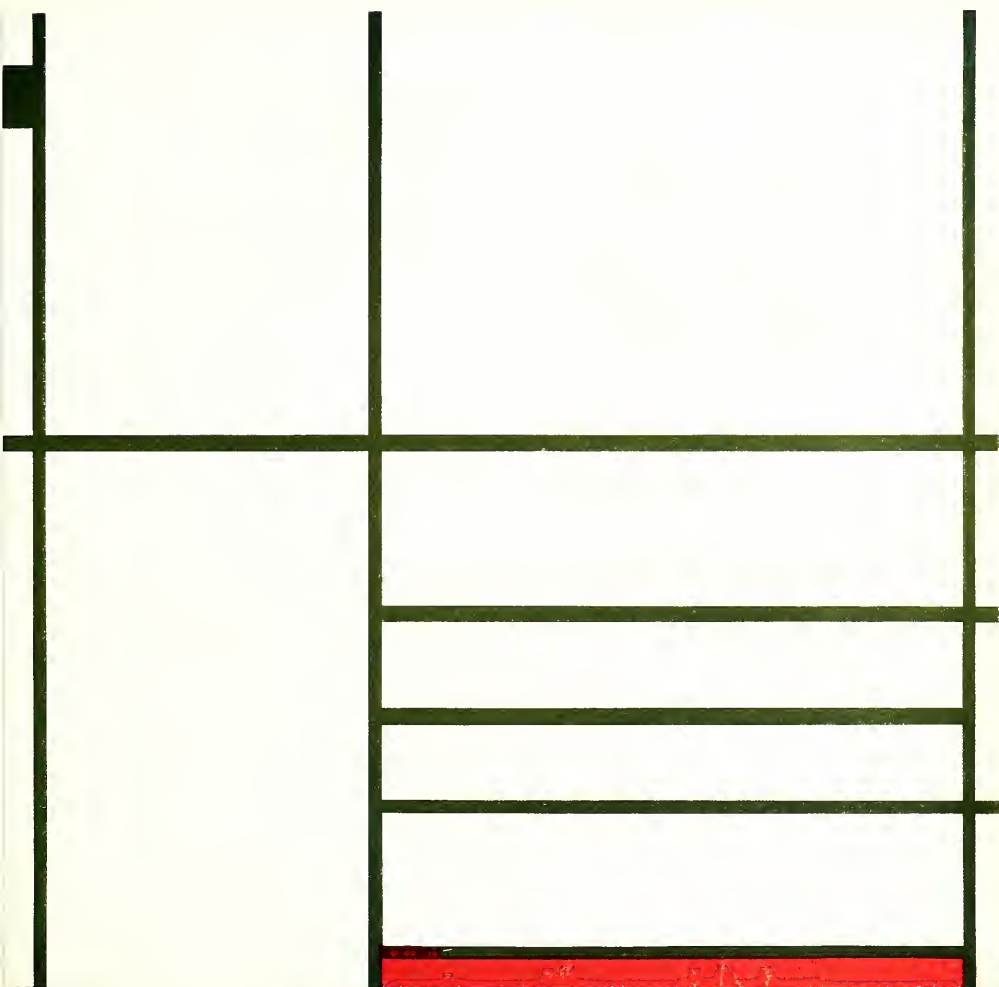
Note 21

Mondrian loved New York. In the horizontal – and vertical – streets of Manhattan, he may have rediscovered the horizontal Dutch canals. Between Amsterdam and New Amsterdam there was just a canal to be crossed – the Atlantic. He crossed it in his own way, never increasing his pace, taking the longest way round. In fact, he remained a student all his life. He was an eager apprentice to the life of the future, as out of his element in the present as a man of the Middle Ages who would be resurrected today.

Mondrian lived in New York for three years and four months. His first apartment where he lived until October, 1943, was at First Avenue and 56th Street – 353 East 56th Street, to be exact. There he had two rooms and a kitchen on the third floor. The room he used as a studio faced First Avenue, and one could see from the street below the rectangles of vivid color with which he customarily covered his walls. He often changed the positions of these rectangles, and they were like a picture perpetually remade.

First Avenue is a large thoroughfare devoid of any particular charm, with a dense automobile traffic. The part which concerns us runs through an old residential district, rather fashionable with its proximity to the East River and its feeling of remoteness. Most of the buildings on both sides of the street are generally of brick, not very high, although opposite Mondrian's studio was a fairly new and large apartment building. Not far away is the Queensborough Bridge, enormous and ugly, carrying a heavy traffic over the river and Welfare Island. A short walk took Mondrian to the center of New York's art trade, for 57th Street between

Composition with Red and Black – *Komposition mit Rot und Schwarz*
Composition avec rouge et noir (1936) ►



Fifth and Park Avenues contains most of the important art galleries in the country. In October, 1943, when he moved to a larger studio at 15 East 59th Street, he was even closer to the galleries. He was also close by the little zoo in Central Park, where, despite his distaste for trees, he would sometimes promenade with Fritz Glarner, the painter who became his disciple and good friend.

As for his first apartment, the following passage from the unpublished journal of Miss Charmion von Wiegand describes both the studio and the man as they first appeared to her:

"On the walls in the front room hang sketches; on one wall rectangles of blue, red, and yellow. Red predominates. The sketches are old, on paper, done with charcoal, ink, or pencil. There is a table, a single white-legged stool with a bright scarlet painted seat, and a folding canvas officer's chair; no "bourgeois" upholstery, no ornaments.

"He is very cordial and peers at you, through glasses, with keen brown eyes that sometimes flash with a fanatic and intense gaze and are again turned inward. He speaks English tolerably as to accent, and has an excellent vocabulary – the speech of an intellectual. There was an easel in the corner with a small picture in a double frame. There were pictures leaning against all the walls . . . He explained that he did not work with instruments nor through analysis, but by means of intuition and the eye. He tests each picture over a long period by eye: it is a physical adjustment of proportion through training, intuition, and testing.

"Mondrian showed me a picture, which had been exhibited in the Abstract show at the Riverside Museum: a square with black lines. Beside one of the squares, he had traced a thin charcoal line. He explained that when it was hung, he felt the two lines on the outer edges did not carry sufficiently, that they needed widening; he will repaint them a quarter of an inch broader. To my eyes, this made little difference, but he is sensitive to the laws of proportion to a fantastic degree and to him it seemed important."

Further on in the same journal, there is the following passage, which seems to me remarkable:

"These canvases are deed [sic], a revolutionary act in the true sense of the word, for they have changed me and they react upon their environment, so that they must in the end change life. . . . As an artist, Mondrian is still developing and one feels no sign of age, he is living in the present with the full force of his being. He is an example of the power of the spirit over the flesh, for he looks very thin and frail, but not weak and certainly not old."

Here a young woman, speaking of a man of 69, pertinently remarks that the mind cannot age, so that those who live for the mind

New York Studio

Note 22

alone are ageless. In youth, they have the maturity of old age; in old age, they are youthful in spirit.

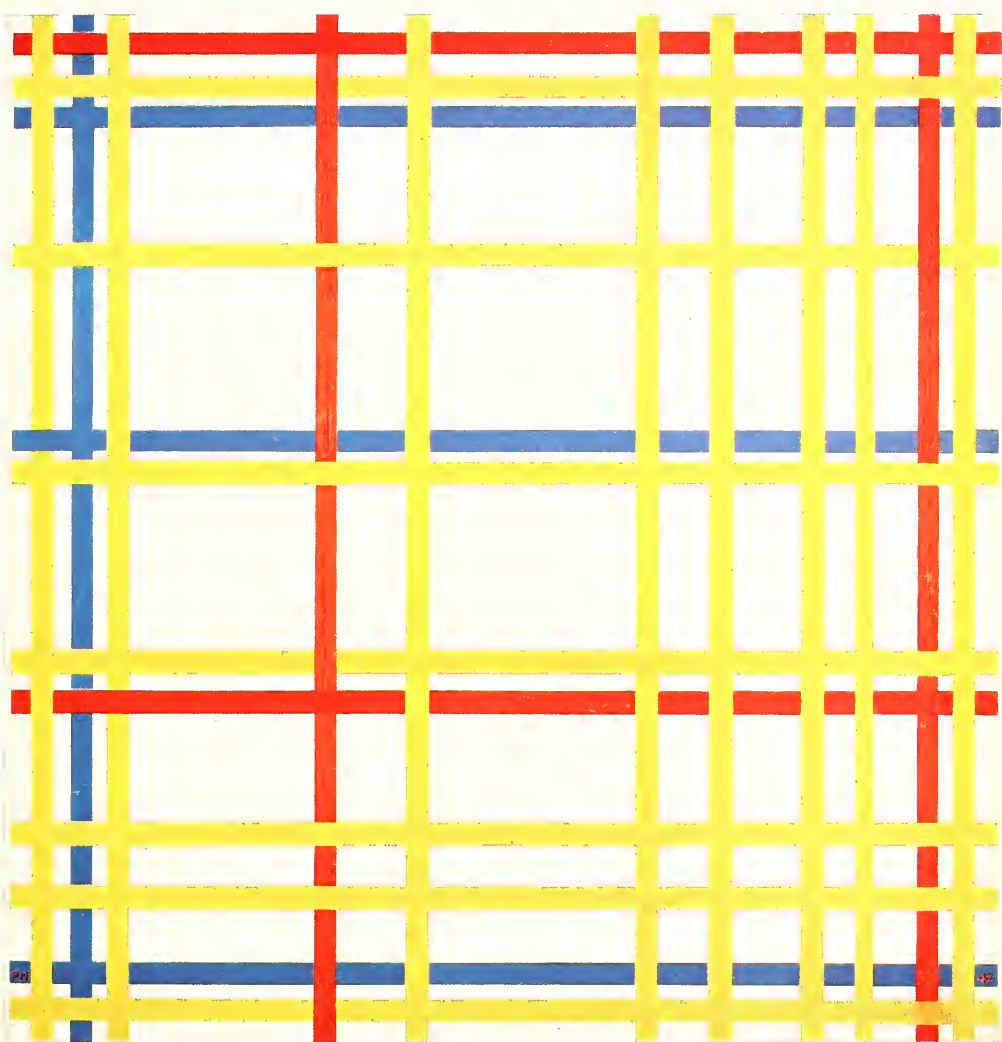
pp. 36-38 Mondrian's second apartment was very much like the first. It, too, was on the fourth floor and included a kitchen and two rooms, one of which served as a studio, the other as a bedroom. Fritz Glarner took many photos of these rooms, so that we can easily reconstitute them.

p. 38 The studio was almost bare – a collapsible easel and two simple white, painted crates; on one of these he kept his palette, in the other his stock of colors – that was all. The walls, painted off-white, were spangled with squares of pure colors, whose disposition recalled Mondrian's 1917-18 rectangular compositions without lines.

p. 40 The bedroom contained a narrow bed and one light armchair. A small cabinet, made by Mondrian out of some of the wood from the two crates, rested on the floor. Another crate served as a chair in front of a little table (just big enough to hold some papers and an alarm clock). The table, like everything else, had been made out of crates. These bare furnishings had also been carefully painted white. The sobriety and purity of the line gave the room a wonderful elegance. The same squares of painted cardboard as in the studio played a lively *pizzicato* of the three primary colors on the uniformly white background of the walls.

Clearly, this was the dwelling of an ascetic, of a man who had reduced his life to the essential. But this ascetic was not a melancholic: he adored color, and, through it, the temporal slipped into his life. He was an ascetic artist, an ascetic sensitive to plastic values, the ascetic of the beautiful as such. Mondrian was the first contemplator of a transcendental aesthetic, the first image-maker of the absolute.

I have often walked along 59th Street, where the painter last lodged (the building no longer exists). On one side, the block he lived on flows into the elegance of Fifth Avenue between two skyscrapers; right across from the Plaza Hotel, in the other direction it reaches out into busy Madison Avenue, with its drugstores and snack bars of every variety. On the ground floor of the building where Mondrian lived was the large window display of an antiquarian dealer in bric-a-brac, Mr. Gutradt, with piles of out-of-date plateware, the most academically rococo candelabras, figurines, and Saxon china; *ALL WORKS OF ART* runs the inscription in gold letters.



The bit of sidewalk in front of your shop, dear Mr. Gutradt, is the last spot trodden by the feet of one Piet Mondrian, who will doubtless remain unknown to you for a long time. In this world there are worlds which never meet.

Appearance of Colored Lines

Around May, 1941, during the second year of his stay in New York, Mondrian's work underwent an important transformation, which to this day is not understood by some zealous disciples of his Paris period. One of them even stated publicly that Mondrian had become senile, and that death happily prevented him from making new mistakes. There are always people who harden in the mold of a limited admiration, and whose initial goodwill is changed into bad faith when the object of their admiration turns out to be not a statue, but a living being of flesh and blood.

For me, on the contrary, the final renewal of Mondrian's painting is the proof of an exceptional old age, proof that the mind of the painter had retained all its freshness, and, finally, it is evidence of an undiminished will to growth. To me his old age was like that of Michelangelo and Goethe who, laden with years retained their creative power and intellectual resilience.

New York City p. 183

Broadway Boogie-Woogie p. 185

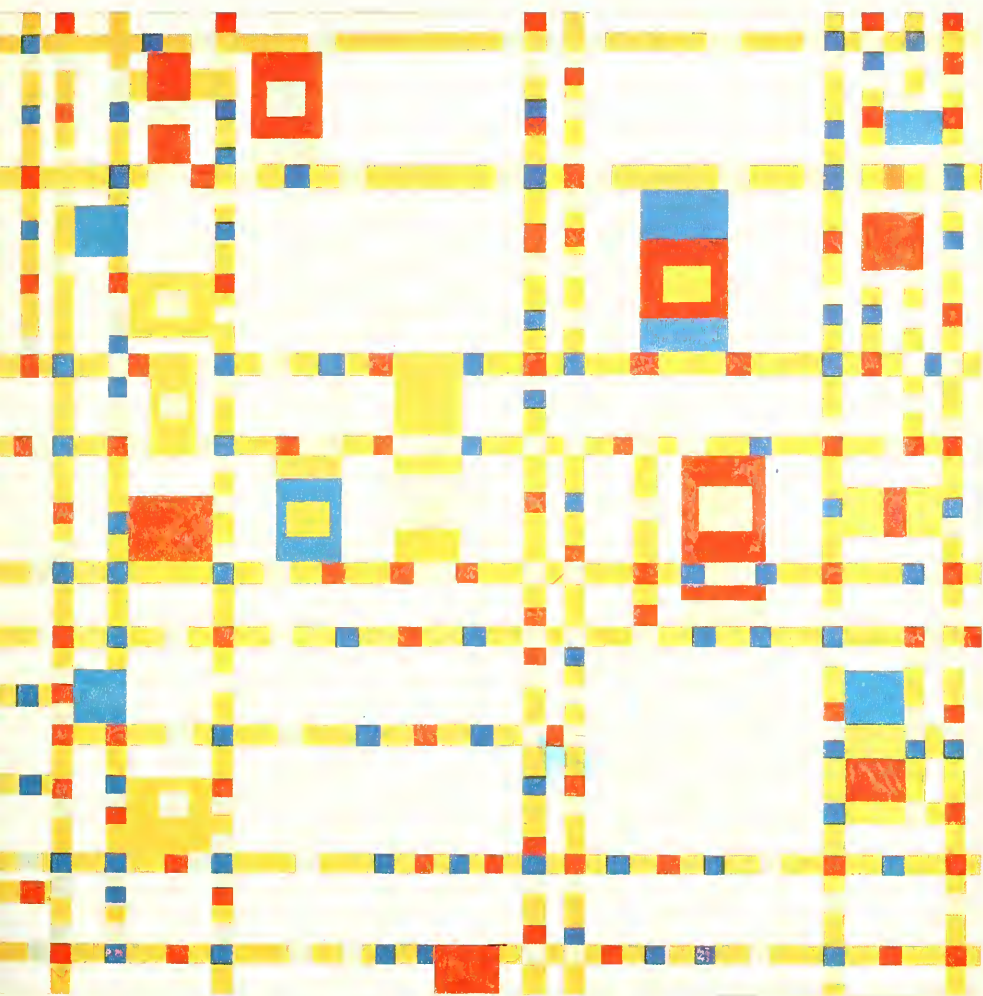
And what, after all, was the great misdeed spoken of in Paris at the meeting of a coterie in 1950? The black line suddenly disappeared (canvas entitled *New York City*, finished in 1942), making way for red, blue, and yellow lines, and then, in the two last great works of his life (*Broadway Boogie-Woogie* and the unfinished *Victory Boogie-Woogie*), the line of uniform color was replaced by a large number of little squares. On the first of these canvases, the lines are yellow, the squares red, blue, and gray; on the second, the lines no longer have a dominant color but are made up of a succession of red, blue, yellow, and gray little squares. Black is completely excluded from all three works.

What had happened to justify such an important step? A painter had changed continents: only that. What might have seemed right on one side of the ocean, was no longer so on the other. First the black bars became brighter, and then they rocketed off in bursts, signaling Mondrian's *Victory*, and giving this unfinished, but complete, canvas the accents of a sublime symphony drenched in idealism and vibrant with youth.

Victory Boogie-Woogie p. 191

Victory Boogie-Woogie has already caused much ink to flow and several arguments. Mr. and Mrs. Tremaine who own the canvas had

Broadway Boogie-Woogie (1942-43) ►



a copy made of it by Miss Perle Fine. Another copy of questionable value was done in Amsterdam. Miss Perle Fine also worked out a subtle graphic analysis of the painting in a series of twelve diagrams, which seem to me very intelligently conceived. The importance Mondrian attached to the canvas is evident in the conversations and excerpts from his letters which James Johnson Sweeney published in *Art News* (Summer issue, 1951). Mondrian had been working on the painting for over a year when death overtook him.

As for me, I like to see in his last work an image of New York, but in the same sense as the 1911 and 1912 works of Braque and Picasso are an image of Paris, especially of the section immediately surrounding the so-called *bateau-lavoir* where they lived and worked. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that Mondrian's Boogie-Woogie pictures are an abstract re-creation (I do not say "abstraction") of New York, especially of New York as it appeared to him at night when he walked to the Plaza from the corner of 59th Street. The lit-up skyscrapers, as seen from the steps of the Plaza Hotel, are a *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. But all New York is that at night. The wall made by the file of big buildings along Central Park West to Columbus Circle is a *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. When you walk along 42nd Street, from the Public Library to Times Square, you have to your left another *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. And still another in Rockefeller Center, from whatever side you approach it.

This may be taken as another proof that every artist undergoes – consciously or otherwise – the influence of the environment in which he lives. Three forces participate ineluctably in his work – the immediate environment (what the artist sees); the visceral constitution of the individual (what the artist feels); culture of the mind (what the artist wants).

Almost all the other big paintings of these last years were begun in Paris or in London and finished in New York (*Place de la Concorde*, 1938–43; *Trafalgar Square*, 1939–43). And this "finishing touch" invariably consisted in the addition of little rectangles in color which were placed more freely and not flanked on all four sides by the usual black lines. As a result, these paintings are less austere (less static but more dynamic, as Mondrian would put it) without, however, violating the Neo-Plastic law of the right angle used exclusively in the *horizontal-vertical* position. Mondrian never abandoned this principle, adhering to it strictly until the end.

Place de la Concorde p. 298

Trafalgar Square p. 295

While he did not become rich, Mondrian, after a year's stay in New York, had a sufficient income. His art dealer, Valentin Dudensing sold his canvases without any difficulty at prices of about \$ 200, at times

higher. This dealer seems to have been really friendly to Mondrian. He gave two exhibitions of the painter's work, one in January-February, 1942, the other (with the sculptor Maria) in March-April, 1943. Dudensing gave him \$400 as an advance on *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. Moreover, he introduced Mondrian to Keith Warner, a collector and manufacturer of women's handbags, who, out of interest for the artist, offered to pay \$200 monthly, in return for which the artist would occasionally meet with the company's designer. This generous help did not begin, however, until two months before Mondrian's death.

Last Years

During his two last years he was very active in the artistic life of New York. In 1942, he gave a reading of his essay *A New Realism* at the Nierendorf Gallery, under the auspices of the American Abstract Artists. In 1943, he was a member of the jury for the first spring show, *Art of This Century*. He had friendly meetings with André Breton and Max Ernst, the French Surrealists, whom the war had brought to New York. Towards the end of 1943, a number of journalists came to interview him; some weeks before his death he told one of them, speaking in English, after commending American open-mindedness:

"I feel here is the place to be, and I am becoming an American citizen. Where you live you belong to it, and when you feel a place is the nearest to you, you should become a part of it."

On Monday, January 24, 1944, Hans Richter, the noted painter and scenario-writer, received a postcard from Mondrian, the last he wrote. It is in English and very simply worded: "Dear Richter, Thank you for your good wishes and invitation. I have been suffering from bronchitis and am not yet sure whether I can come to your party. If so, you'll hear from me later."

Richter lived at 134 East 60th Street, right around the corner from Mondrian. He looked forward to visiting him that very evening to find out definitely about the old man's health. "But two men, quite drunk, had quarreled at my place," Richter recalls, "and this prevented us from dining before nine o'clock. I had been invited to the Serts, who lived in the same house as Mondrian. I went there, but it was about ten-thirty, and the Serts thought it best not to disturb Mondrian at that hour."

By that time Mondrian had been stricken with pneumonia. He remained without aid, visited by no one, for two days. As a rule, people did not visit Mondrian when not invited: he did not care to be disturbed while at work.

A few days earlier, on January 19th, Holtzman had dined with Mondrian who appeared in reasonably good health. After dinner they enjoyed a long and pleasant evening of discussion in Holtzman's studio. They made a tentative appointment to meet again the following weekend. On

Tuesday night, January 25, Holtzman met Fritz Glarner who had seen Mondrian on Sunday. He told Holtzman that Mondrian had a bad cold at that time, but had seemed otherwise all right. This was disturbing news, and Holtzman told Glarner that he would go the next day to see how Piet was. When Holtzman came, he found that Glarner had arrived shortly before him. Mondrian was in bed with a high fever and was very weak. Holtzman went down to call Mondrian's doctor (Mondrian had never wished to have a telephone), who upon examination recommended immediate hospitalization. Piet expressed his aversion to hospitals, but after a time he reluctantly consented when he was convinced that the Murray Hill Hospital was more like a hotel than a hospital. While the doctor and Holtzman left to call the hospital, Glarner helped Mondrian dress and assisted him down. Holtzman brought his car to the front of his house. They then drove the short distance to the hospital on 40th Street. The room, high up in the building, had a handsome view of mid-Manhattan. The next day Mondrian expressed his pleased surprise about the place. Day and night nurses were in attendance. After the first day, when it was plain that the pneumonia was critical, Holtzman asked the physician to call in a consulting specialist, which he did. But the effect of the early strain had been too great (this was before the day of antibiotics).

For five days Mondrian's condition deteriorated little by little; on January 31, it was considered hopeless. Glarner and Holtzman kept watch at his bedside all night. Miss Von Wiegand was admitted to the room of the dying man, who was feebly gasping for breath, and burst into tears. A doctor led her to the corridor where Mrs. Holtzman, Calder, Richter, and Sweeney were waiting. Mrs. Glarner stayed in the lobby downstairs to receive visitors. No one spoke. Listening attentively one could hear only the light breathing of a man laboring to leave this life.

At five o'clock in the morning, on February 1, it was all over.

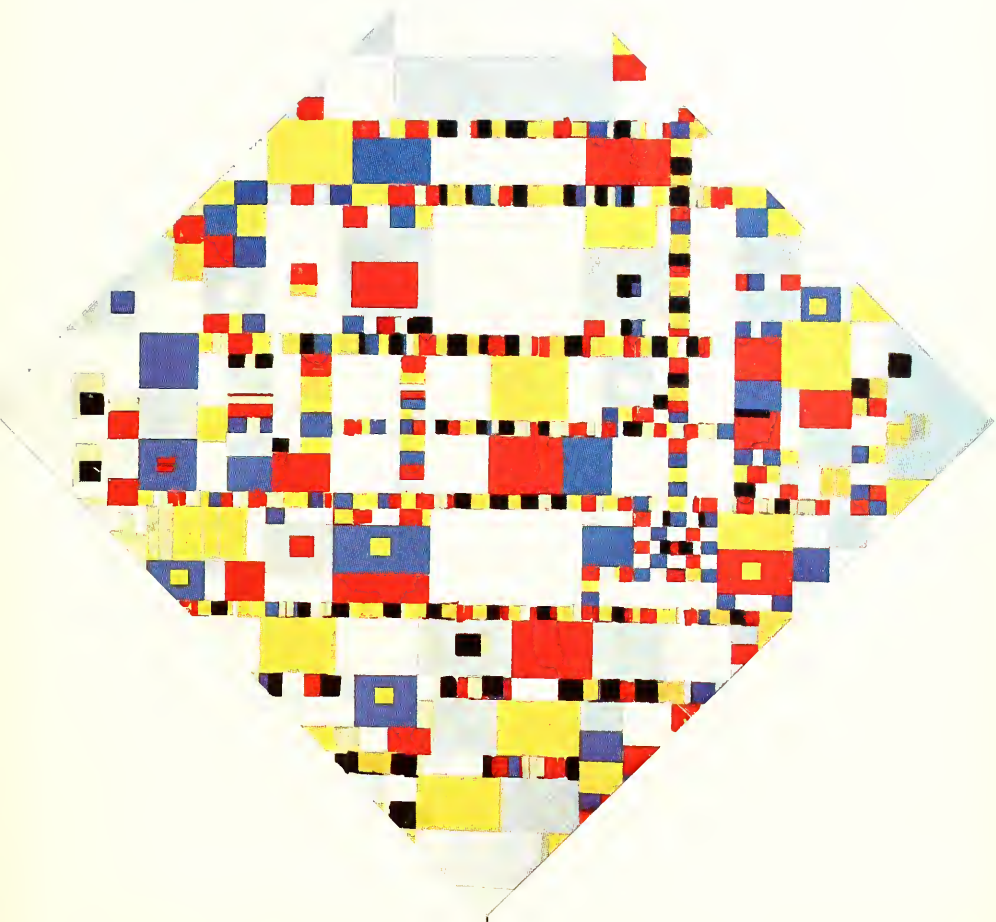
Der Starke steht allein ("the strong man stands alone"), says Nietzsche. That is true, but the world has its eyes on him, and if he is famous, each of those who watch him die turns out to be his friend, and even his most faithful supporter. Sometimes even his most perfidious detractors become his apologists.

Victory After Death

It was discovered at the funeral that Mondrian, the solitary, had many friends in New York. He was buried on February 3, in Cypress Hill Cemetery, in Brooklyn. A funeral service had been held in Universal Chapel, at the corner of 52nd Street and Lexington Avenue. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum of Modern Art, and T. Elink-Schuurman, Consul-General of the Netherlands, delivered the funeral orations before some two hundred people. Here are some of the names mentioned in the *Knickerbocker Weekly*: Fernand Léger, Kurt Seligman, Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, Moholy-Nagy, Kisling, Ozenfant, Hans Richter, Fritz Glarner, Herbert Bayer, Matta, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, Jean Xcéron, José-Louis Sert, Frederick Kiesler, Jean Hélion, Archipenko, G. L. K. Morris, Harry Holtzman, Stuart Davis, Calder, Holty, Diller, Saul Schary, Peter Blume, Walkowitz, Robert Motherwell, Ilya Bolotovsky, Charles Shaw, Leo Lionni, Alice Mason, Ibram Lassaw, Suzy Frelinghuysen, Charmion von Wiegand, Siegfried Giedion, Henry McBride, James Johnson Sweeney, Samuel Kootz, Dwight MacDonald, Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, Katherine Dreier, A. E. Gallatin, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Reis, James Thrall Soby, Howard Putzel, Peggy Guggenheim, Hilla Rebay, Valentin Duden-sing, Julien Levy, Pierre Matisse, Karl Nierendorf.

Alfred Barr, who spoke first, said that Mondrian "was the greatest Dutch painter of our time." He called attention to the extraordinary lesson in perseverance Mondrian had given for twenty-five years, and to the influence he had exerted. Mr. Schuurman spoke of him as a man "of strong character who refused to be influenced by the ever-changing tastes of the public or by money or fame, and would never leave the path of what he thought to be the truth. In Holland, as well as in France and America, he was highly regarded for his deep convictions, his integrity, and unselfishness."

The remarkable fact is that this friend of solitude and silence always enjoyed excellent relations with other painters. Jan Sluyters,



Simon Maris, Cornelis Spoor, Jean Toorop, Conrad Kickert, were his successive companions during his naturalistic Dutch period. Later his friends were Doesburg and Van der Leek. In his second Parisian period, his closest painter friend was first Vantongerloo, and then Gorin. He was on good terms with Delaunay, Freundlich, and Arp. In 1929–31, I often accompanied him on Sundays to Pevsner's, who was always most cordial.

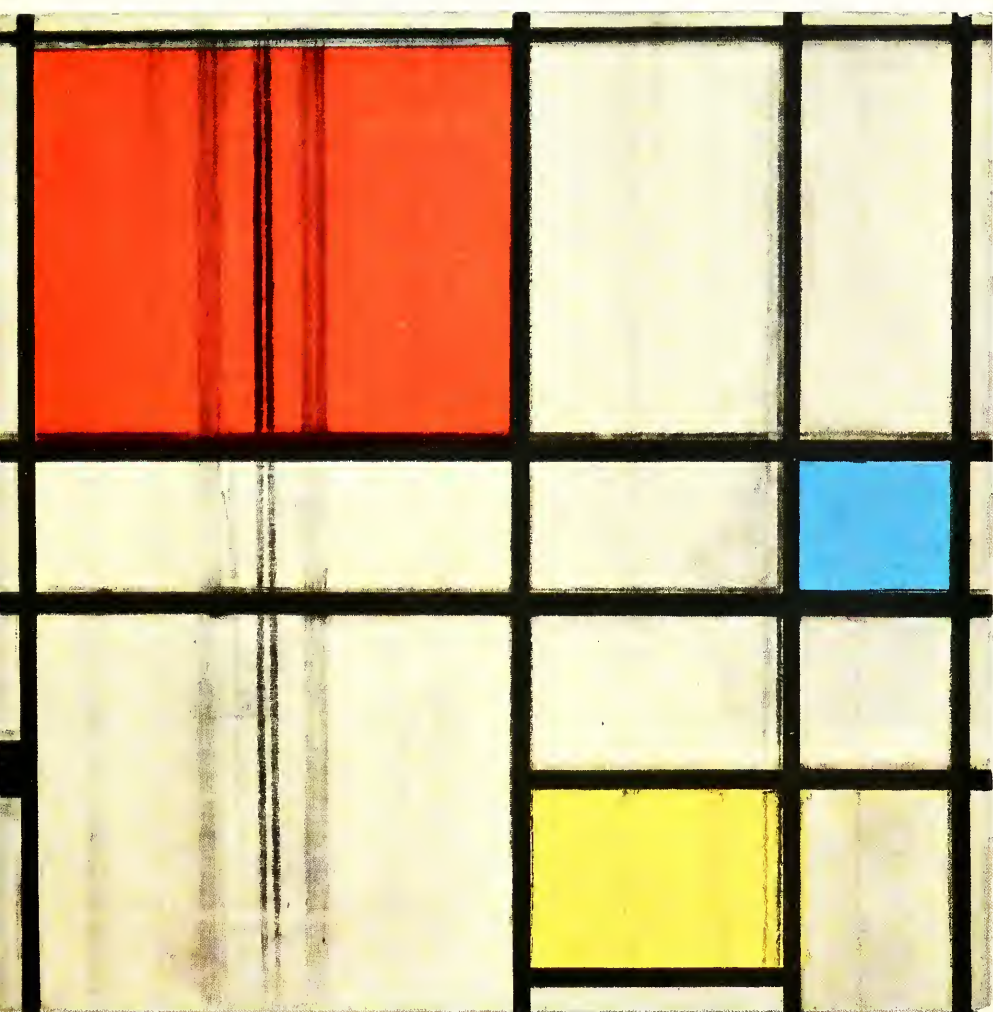
In New York, his painter friends were Holtzman and Glarner. I should also mention Richter, Charmion von Wiegand, Carl Holty, and the art critic James Johnson Sweeney. Mondrian greatly admired Calder, who reciprocated.

He had excellent friends outside the world of painting, too. The first of these was Albert van den Briel, whom he came to know in 1899, on leaving a concert: Mondrian had taken him for Jan Sluyters. This simple Dutch official in the Department of Streams and Forests often came to his aid in difficult moments. Mondrian was always heartened by his visits to Paris, and in 1940 invited him to London. The sudden German invasion prevented Van den Briel from going.

Another great friend of Mondrian was Salomon Slijper, of Blaricum. They became acquainted in 1916, when Mondrian was living in Laren, a village near Blaricum. Slijper began to collect his works almost immediately, even though he had little money to spare. In this connection he likes to say that he was never rich enough to buy bad paintings, good paintings were so much cheaper! The fact is, though, that Slijper always retained his preference for Mondrian's figurative period. He owns about two hundred works – if one includes drawings – from that period. Many were acquired at public sales. Some came from the shop of Simon Maris. In 1918, when he was completely committed to abstract studies, Mondrian painted a naturalistic self-portrait just to please Slijper. He signed it with two "a's" because it belonged, he said, to another period of his development. Slijper often came to visit him in Paris. But he never bought any abstract works from him after 1921.

Slijper's figurative collection is an extremely important one. My hope is that some day a means will be found of having these works in the Kröller-Müller Museum, which, thanks to the beautiful abstract canvases of Mondrian it already contains, could then reveal the whole progress of the painter in his evolution from Van Gogh to Neo-Plasticism.

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (unfinished)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau (unvollendet) ►
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (inachevée) (1939-44)



In 1926, I read Mondrian a little play I had just written, during a stay in Rome. When I came back to see him several days later, I found in his studio a pretty, multicolored structure, a sort of miniature theater. He enjoyed my surprise. Without consulting me, he had made three different provisional sets (for the three acts), with one Neo-Plastic design, which formed part of the stage itself. The play was to be produced in Lyons in November, 1926, by the Donjon Company. Unfortunately, the company went bankrupt while the play was in rehearsal. As for Mondrian's model, for years it rested on a red bureau in the studio of the Rue du Départ; but it seems not to have survived Mondrian's journeys.

This model was referred to in an article which appeared in the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*, September 12, 1926:

Mondrian's model is very attractive. In the rectangular box, which represents the theater, there are three different sets which can be raised, one after another, and which situate the three acts of the play. And when I say situate, I do not mean on earth but in eternity. Here are three beautiful, abstract compositions which mark the limits of a very narrow stage. Once again we see Mondrian's repugnance for space, which according to him, is much too naturalistic. Does he not place himself, by this, at the opposite pole from a theatrical art based on the three dimensions?

"And the actors?"

"That doesn't concern me. They'll be dressed like modern men, American style. They might just as well not appear. If it were up to me, I would place the actors behind the scenery in such a way that they could not be seen while making their lines heard."

"Why don't you give the actors Neo-Plastic costumes designed in rectangular planes?"

"In any case they would have to be men in motion, the Neo-Plastic idea requires immobility."

Mondrian did another work in collaboration: *a picture-poem*.

In May, 1928, a Montparnasse painter named Clergé, who did nudes a little like Pascin's, organized an exhibition of picture poems in a café near the Porte d'Orléans. The idea then was to make this part of Paris fashionable, and my help was asked. I had met Clergé just before seeing Mondrian, and I mentioned the project.

"I'll be glad to do something," he said. "Have you got a text?"

For that I wasn't prepared, but I thought of Mondrian's offer that night, and the next day I sent him a text by mail. Three days later I went to the Rue du Départ: the picture-poem was ready! Mondrian had

échappée belle de l'art
enfin mesure d'hygiène
ralliez-vous tous au pavillon du grand secours
du grand sérieux quand nous serons mieux éclairés
et disparaissent la flore sous le regard noir
et cessent les éboulements

E

X

l'ilot physique sort des cavernes
il ose construire dans le clair
il leve la tête
où il n'ya que le grand bleu
et le grand gris et le grand blanc
et le grand noir et le soleil tout feu
suivi des synonymes bonheur sagesse connais-
sance
et de la joie...
qu'il ne faut pas confondre encore

T

U

E

L

mais il fallait y penser si j'ose dire
être déjà et non choisir et choisir bien quand-même
mais il fallait prendre contact
marcher longtemps et sous le juste signe

M. Seuphor

16 mai 1928

painted the whole text of the poem, copying the typewritten characters very exactly, and ordering the three parts of the text most harmoniously into a Neo-Plastic composition. This is a variation of a large composition of 1928, now in the Senior collection.

To my knowledge Mondrian never executed any other work in collaboration besides the two I have just mentioned.

By a duly notarized statement he named Harry Holtzman his residuary legatee. There was much talk about this in the art circles of New York, even before Mondrian's death, for the painter had not kept this bequest secret. But it seems to me that the gesture was completely justified, and that, everything considered, Mondrian's action was fair and right. By the legacy, he repaid the man who had helped him a great deal, and who had brought him to America, which was not a small thing. Moreover, the bequest to an American kept his works in the country of his choice, and in the one, too, where they are best protected against police-regime decrees that brand them as "degenerate art" or "bourgeois formalism."

Indeed, this painting, which proposes to be a new and universal language, surely belongs in New York, that small-scale model of the universe, where every language is spoken, and where all the races of the world meet and mix. New York is certainly the only place in the world where one can read in public conveyances official posters bearing inscriptions such as:

FIGHT RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATE! or TRUE AMERICANS JUDGE PEOPLE ONLY BY THEIR INDIVIDUAL WORTH – DO YOU?

The country suited Mondrian – as it should any man with a feeling for freedom. I have even seen in New York, on a skyscraper in the center of the city, the formula which could effectively solve all our international troubles: WORLD PEACE THROUGH WORLD TRADE. I believe that this short sentence, which might seem dictated by commercial greed, is full of profound wisdom. If we are going to be saved, it will have to be by economics, and despite politics. And this is in accord with what Mondrian wrote shortly before his death: "Nazism seeks particular unity through oppression; democracy wants universalism through individual freedom. Nazism goes against the logical progress that we see disclosed in art. Democracy is homogeneous with this progress which is human progress."

Note 25

But the finest victories of this kind of man are always gained after death.

From March to May, 1945, a retrospective exhibition of his works was given in the New York Museum of Modern Art. Holtzman published simultaneously, under the imprint of Wittenborn, the essays Mondrian had written in English.

In November–December, 1946, there was the big memorial exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, with one hundred and twenty-two works of all periods. A part of this exhibition was later shown in the Basel Kunsthalle, in February–March, 1947. Even in Paris, Mondrian was not forgotten, and in the double exhibition of *The First Masters of Abstract Art* at the Maeght Gallery, in 1949, his canvases of 1913 and 1914 were a revelation which strongly impressed certain painters of the so-called "school of Paris."

During his life he had never attended such celebrations.

Note 26

Search for the Absolute

Mondrian did not paint to sell, let alone to shine in art galleries. His single motive was to go forward. He painted only because he believed that painting could be improved: each work had to be an advance over the previous one. "Even so, it's another step," he once said to a friend who was studying a new picture of his, "or don't you think so? Don't you find that it represents even a little step forward? It's hard, my friend, it's very hard."

The evolution of his work is extremely eloquent. No other modern painter came from as far back, none went further ahead. The graph of his progress is absolutely unique: it is so clear and pure, that it creates its own myth. One does not have to invent anything to make Mondrian a legend.

He started from Van Gogh; more than that, he retraced the whole progress of Van Gogh; then, after painting like a Fauve before the Fauves, he overtook Cubism, went beyond it, and slowly continued the process of dematerialization up to his canvas of 1931, with its two black lines on a white ground. Then the curve descends gradually again in the direction of sensory life, ending in the *Boogie-Woogie* paintings, with a new land in sight.

I know no other example of such purposeful clarity. In each new period of his painting he radically discredited the previous period. Mondrian was not at all a "master" accumulating masterpieces, but a man who sought perfection. This he pursued each day with a calm passion, firmly refusing to admit that it does not belong to this world.

At times he thought he had found it. Then he paused, contemplated his work, and said, "it's done." But the clock of his life did not stop ticking, and he had to move on again. And soon he realized that nothing had been achieved, and that it was necessary to begin all over again.

The truth is that no one ever finds perfection. This is not an evil, for search is better than discovery. Some day we may realize that Mondrian's true discovery was his search itself. It is not the goal which is golden, but the way to it. The real treasure is not knowledge, but the unknown in knowledge.

It is this unknown which is the greatest science and the greatest good: this vacuum, this suction, sets everything in motion. It is the absence of something which makes us get to our feet and start moving. Yet we cannot move unless we have an obscure premonition of the goal. Those who heed this premonition, this urge, go straight ahead, like the man who is the subject of this book; the others go around in circles.

So keen was Mondrian's sense of the goal ahead that nothing counted for him except the next step, which each time became an end in itself.

So absolute a purpose led him to hate the stages through which he had already passed. At Paris, in 1912, he regarded all the works he had done in Holland as no better than rags and scraps. He lost interest in them to such a point that he permitted Simon Maris to sign the ones he had left unsigned.

Well into his Neo-Plastic period, he said that the canvases of his Cubist period "were still impressionist," and that "the tragic element had not yet been sufficiently eliminated." Finally, in New York, in 1943, he criticized even the Neo-Plastic works. He said that in Paris he had not yet clearly seen that the dynamic element ought to be preferred to the static. "Only now," he wrote Sweeney, "I become conscious that my work in black, white and little color planes has been merely 'drawing' in oil color. In drawing, the lines are the principal means of expression, in painting the color planes. In painting, however, the lines are absorbed by the color planes, but the limitations [contour] of the planes show themselves as lines and conserve their great value." (*Art News*, Summer, 1951). The lines, formerly so important – at times they alone constituted the composition – were now abolished, and a new path was opened. A year before his death, after a long life devoted to research and uninterrupted work, he believed that there were still discoveries to be made. As is shown by another letter which Sweeney published in the same issue of *Art News*: "[It is] important to discern two sorts of equilibrium: 1, static balance. 2, dynamic equilibrium. For this reason it is understandable that some oppose equilibrium in art; some others defend it. The great struggle for artists is to annihilate static equilibrium in the way of continuous opposition of the means of expression. It is always in human nature to love static balance. This balance of course is necessary to existence in time. But vitality in the continual succession of time always destroys this balance. Abstract art is a concrete expression of this vitality."

Note 27

Each man's life is a marvelous adventure. Each one is different from any other. And there is not one unworthy of investigation, not one whose particular color does not merit scrutiny, whose inner murmur does not solicit our attention. But some lives are phosphorescent, containing a substance not found in our humdrum world. The brilliance of such lives fills the centuries with astonishment; then clumsy attempts are made to convert the light they radiate into legal tender. In the end we get pompous systems of theology and politics, scientific libraries, empires of fanaticism.

For the first time in history, one of these prophets was an artist. For the first time, the task of showing another world within this one was entrusted to an image maker. But this man's images are no longer figurative or symbolic illustrations of literature that is itself only an awkward translation of the truth. This time, it is not a question of reading or interpreting, but of seeing. And for the first time we see what our ears never heard so clearly. We see, face to face, and without words.

You would not seek me if you had not already found me, said Pascal. With an unquenchable thirst for the absolute we are carried along by time, which is in continual transformation and which mystifies us. What is pure in us we can see around us, but always under a veil. Mondrian spent his life removing such veils, and making the outer like the inner. For those with the eyes to see he succeeded, I believe, in bringing the mystery to full light.

The Man and his Work

The similarity of the inner and the outer which he pursued was visible not only in his pictures, but also in his various studios. The style he gave them revealed to a visitor what the natural modesty of the man hid under a thousand silken strands of politeness and friendship. It is true that our dwelling is but our amplest garment and it is certain that it expresses – often against our will – what we really are. But Mondrian wanted this accord to be consciously achieved. That is why one of his most urgent preoccupations was to keep his living quarters in harmony with the development of his painting and with his thought.

His progress was very slow, very cautious, and hence sure and profound. The roads he clears are not paths in virgin forests for the tracking of some rare game; they are lasting roads, at the crossings of which cities will be built.

This sober builder, this hero of measure and reflection, contrasts sharply with so many of our nervous artists who are unable to sleep at night if they have not somehow distinguished themselves during the day. Their revolutions are at a discount. They manufacture revolutions on the assembly line, and without purpose, as one launches new styles. They have no future. All this modernistic cacophony is nothing but a big masquerade, where the great words are thrown about like confetti, where conquests do not extend beyond the exhibition room, and where nothing is undertaken with a view to laying a foundation for something to be built.

Mondrian followed his isolated path outside all this artistic agitation: real culture has nothing in common with culture media for micro-organisms. But Mondrian was a founder of culture, I mean a creator of disciplines; others will use his discoveries for capricious fireworks, but

his work is before us in its pure splendor – the work as well as the man who created it.

For, here as elsewhere, the man and the work are inseparable. It has often been said that Mondrian was an ascetic, a saint. Others, who knew him, have contradicted this, for Mondrian never desired to be taken for an ascetic or a saint. He did not wish to distinguish himself in any way from the common run of people, wearing the same tie as everybody, buying his loaf of bread at the baker's on the corner, chatting with the janitor, and drinking white wine. Nevertheless, he was an ascetic and a saint. He knew how to reduce his vital needs to a minimum, so as to make his social ties as tenuous as possible, or rather he strove to reduce the *old material ties* with existing society, in order to devote all the energy released toward the establishment of *new spiritual ties* with an ideal society constantly in formation. He never spoke ill of anyone. He never injured anyone. With perfect naturalness, he sought the good hidden in each thing, each being, and strove constantly to reconcile ideas, and to bring men to agreement. He was never ostentatious; he was never self-seeking, he never put himself forward, and did not even take the place to which he was entitled. He did not arrogate to himself any special rights. Such behavior, if I am not mistaken, deserves to be called saintly.

Yet it seems to me that the term "aristocrat" suits him better than any other. The slow progress of his thought, his life's calm and constant challenge to time and circumstance, his lofty idea of man and of his personal mission among men, are surely the attributes of the spiritual aristocrat.

He walked softly, spoke amiably, he never disturbed his neighbors; his fellow painters hardly knew he existed. But there he is. And he is what he is, without fuss, but also without compromise. He asserts himself without shouting, but without yielding anything. He will sacrifice nothing to fame, but real fame means to be as one wants to be, and to sacrifice nothing to fame or to facility. If man is a rational being, he must be responsible for each spoken word, each line drawn by the brush; he must leave nothing to chance. This is perhaps the portrait of an ascetic and a saint. But I rather see in it the features of an aristocrat, who without bravura or pose assumes the burden of being the best, and, by a secret decision, is placed at the head of his generation. He wears no badge of honor, he seeks no title, he is the most modest person imaginable, yet it is he who, despite everything, is the guide.

It is not to be inferred from this that Mondrian was a teacher with a doctrine to impart. We should rather think of him simply as a beacon indicating that the haven is at hand; indicating also, to those of adventurous temperament, that the open sea is in the opposite direction.

But it is good even for those who prefer wild adventure to know that the port exists. Is it not to their fear of the port that they owe their love of the open sea? Human personalities are defined through contraries. Mondrian and Van Gogh, style and emotion, yin and yang, being and becoming. Everywhere we discover the fundamental dualism, the irreducible opposition of forces that are nevertheless in balance. From this dualism sprang the philosophy of life which Mondrian made the foundation of Neo-Plasticism, and which is expressed in the right angle and the thousand variations the artist invented around this single theme. Here is a kind of gigantic, plastic fugue, which it took twenty-nine years to play.

Notes and References

- 1 *Mystiek en esoteriek* (Microcosmos in Macrocosmos), lecture given at The Hague, March 5, 1908.
- 2 *Aan de voeten van den Meester* ("At the Feet of the Master"), by Alcyone (J. Krishnamurti). New edition, 1913 (first edition, 1911).
- 3 The isle of Walcheren at that time looked quite differently from what it looks now. It was covered with trees, flower gardens, and hawthorn hedges. The roads were lined with tall poplars swaying in the sea breeze. There were woods around the villages, and numerous willows along the canals. The floods of 1945 and 1954 destroyed all this, and transformed this immense, rich garden into pasture land.
- 4 Mondrian was a member of two artists' societies – *Arti et Amicitiae*, and *Sint Lucas Gilde* – and was represented in their exhibitions each year. At one of these exhibitions he received the Queen's Medal, "as a reward for his work."
- 5 To a Dutch journalist Mondrian spoke of the "very distinguished gray of the houses of Paris."
- 6 The word "spiritual" (*geestelijke*) was later crossed out and replaced by the word "artistic" (*artistieke*).
- 7 There are numerous drawings among these undated notes. The drawings enable us to say that one of the notebooks was, at least in part, written in 1910 or 1911. The other, which mentions Picasso, was probably written in its entirety in 1914.
- 8 On this point Mondrian is in perfect agreement with Cézanne: "To paint after nature is not, for an Impressionist, to paint the object but to be true to his sensation."
- 9 The first time I saw one of these drawings in Mondrian's studio in 1923, I asked him if it was a synthesis of the tree. He replied: "If you like."
- 10 *De Stijl*, last number, Theo van Doesburg commemorative issue, published by Mrs. Van Doesburg in January, 1932.
- 11 *Maatschappij voor goede en goedkoope lectuur*, Amsterdam, 4th edition, 1914.
- 12 Van Dishoeck, Bussum, 1915.
- 13 *Uitgave van den Nieuwen Kring*, Amsterdam, MCMXVI.

14 Probably at the beginning of 1916. On February 7 of that year, Doesburg wrote to Antonie Kok: "Laren seems to me to be an admirable spot for tranquil thinking. There are quite a few people there who are concerned with the life of abstract thinking. I am sure that they would find your ideas excellent, what I mean is, pure. But Mondrian is not the man to have many friends. He prefers to remain isolated and does not care to make new acquaintances."

15 Some years ago, Le Corbusier remembered *De Stijl* when he wrote: "In the dilemma between representational and non-representational art, we must see an architectural instinct. The spirits of architecture are unemployed, diffused, in suspense in our time, and they cannot take on flesh. Architecture is still too mean, too stupid, too devoid of its proper essence: outstanding distinction and radiating light. Piet Mondrian, a heroic pilgrim, one of the 'homeless,' incarnated that tragic destiny. Coming after him there are young people who find themselves plunged into the same dilemma. They are no longer painters – they are already architects. They will emerge as architects when the time shall come. Architecture is waiting for them so that it may be illuminated again by smiles, grandeur, and joy at the appointed hour, the hour of fruition of a century which has been pathetic in its toil and tragedy. Patience: the day will come." (*New World of Space*, New York, 1948.)

16 Out of hostility for the Circle and Square, Doesburg, in collaboration with Carlsund, Hélion, and Tutundjan, founded the magazine *Art concret* in the spring of 1930. It had only this one issue. Meanwhile, despite Doesburg's efforts, several former contributors to *De Stijl*, among them Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Huszar, Arp, Vordemberge-Gildewart, and Schwitters, had to come to the defense of the Circle and Square, and in April 1930 participated in the international exhibition held by the group at 23 Rue de la Boétie. Doesburg deeply resented this. In the course of a visit to the exhibition he came to blows with Vantongerloo who "almost killed him" by throwing him down a staircase leading to the basement. Doesburg was particularly enraged by the friendship that had developed since 1923 between Mondrian and the author of this book. In the second issue of *Cercle et Carré* Mondrian published an important essay entitled "Realist Art and Surrealist Art." Moreover he (as well as Vantongerloo) regularly attended the group's meetings that took place twice a month, in a room on the second floor of the Café Voltaire, Place de l'Odéon, and later on the second floor of the Brasserie Lipp, Boulevard Saint-Germain. Twenty to thirty persons attended these meetings, which Vantongerloo all by himself managed to make very stormy.

17 But this is what he told a Dutch journalist, who came to interview him in 1922: "Paris is good for me, and I like this studio. But I don't know if I'll be able to stay. For two years I've been afraid that I would have to leave. These are very difficult times for painters. Even the naturalists can't earn much. For a while, I thought of going to the South, where I could make myself useful in the fields, on some peasant farm. I've looked for work in Paris, too. But I couldn't find anything. If need be, I'll give up painting entirely, rather than conform to mass taste." (*De Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, March 23, 1922.)

18 In a previous letter to Slijper, dated July 31, 1923, Mondrian wrote: "Since Neo-Plasticism has now been established once and for all, this [i. e., having to paint flowers] is not so terrible after all. It bores me, that's all. However, I would still be happy to earn something just to eat." In January, 1924, he wrote again: "But without the flowers I wouldn't be able to."

19 Some group photos can lead one to misjudge Mondrian's stature. He had the habit of lightly flexing the knees, and almost always placed himself in the background, behind the others.

20 The Dutch who came in large numbers to see him during this long Parisian period – someone even said that a visit to Mondrian's studio was a regular part of the sightseeing tour of Paris – were rarely art collectors.

21 It is only fair to say that some years before, Mondrian had also been attached to Paris. "It's here that everything is happening," he would say to me each time I left on a trip, "you are wrong to leave Paris."

22 The unfinished works in Holtzman's collection are covered with charcoal lines, incompletely erased, so that some of these canvases seem entirely gray; they certainly show what laborious studies were involved in each composition.

23 Vantongerloo had amused himself for years by making a mathematical analysis of Mondrian's canvases. Mondrian greatly admired the mountains of figures Vantongerloo piled up, but he had no understanding of this recondite algebra. It should be made clear that Mondrian never made use of geometrical or algebraic calculations. He was a poor mathematician, and used only the most primitive tools – a ruler and strips of white paper. He often repeated that the rightness of proportions and relations depended on intuition alone.

24 "*The Ephemeral is Eternal*, theatrical demonstrations in three actions and two interludes, with chorus and ballet." Published, with a decor by Mondrian, in *Lecture Élémentaire*, Paris, 1928.

25 From a manuscript owned by Miss Charmion von Wiegand.

26 Since the writing of this book there have been other important retrospective showings of Mondrian – at the Municipal Museum in The Hague (129 works), at the Zurich Kunsthau (119 works), and the Whitechapel Gallery in London (55 works). All of these were held in 1955. Finally, in 1956, a special room was devoted to Mondrian at the Venice Biennale.

27 See also *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art*, page 25 (Wittenborn).



Cows by Water – Kühe am Wasser – Vaches au bord de l'eau (c. 1890)



Still Life with Fish – Stilleben mit Fischen – Nature morte aux poissons (1893)



Mill on River – Mühle am Fluß – Moulin au bord du fleuve (c. 1900)



Landscape (before 1908) – Landschaft (vor 1908) – Paysage (avant 1908)



Landscape near Oele (before 1908) – Landschaft bei Oele (vor 1908) – Paysage près d'Oele (avant 1908)



Farm near Duivendrecht (before 1908) – Bauernhof bei Duivendrecht (vor 1908)
Ferre à Duivendrecht (avant 1908)



Farm near Duivendrecht (before 1908) – Bauernhof bei Duivendrecht (vor 1908)
Ferre à Duivendrecht (avant 1908)



Trees – Baume – Arbres (c. 1906)



ees (before 1908) – Bäume (vor 1908) – Arbres (avant 1908)



Cows Grazing – Kühe auf der Weide – Vaches dans le pré (c. 1902)



sheepfold in the Evening – Schafstall am Abend – Bergerie le soir (1907)



Farmhouse with Poultry Yard (before 1908) – Bauernhaus mit Hühnerhof (vor 1908) – Ferme avec basse-cour (avant 1908)



anding Pier – Schiff im Hafen – Barque au repos (c.1900)



Woods near Oele – Wald bei Oele – Bois près d'Oele (c. 1907)



Self-Portrait – Selbstporträt – Portrait du peintre par lui-même (c. 1600)



The River Gein: Willows – Am Gein: Weiden – Saules près du Gein (1903)



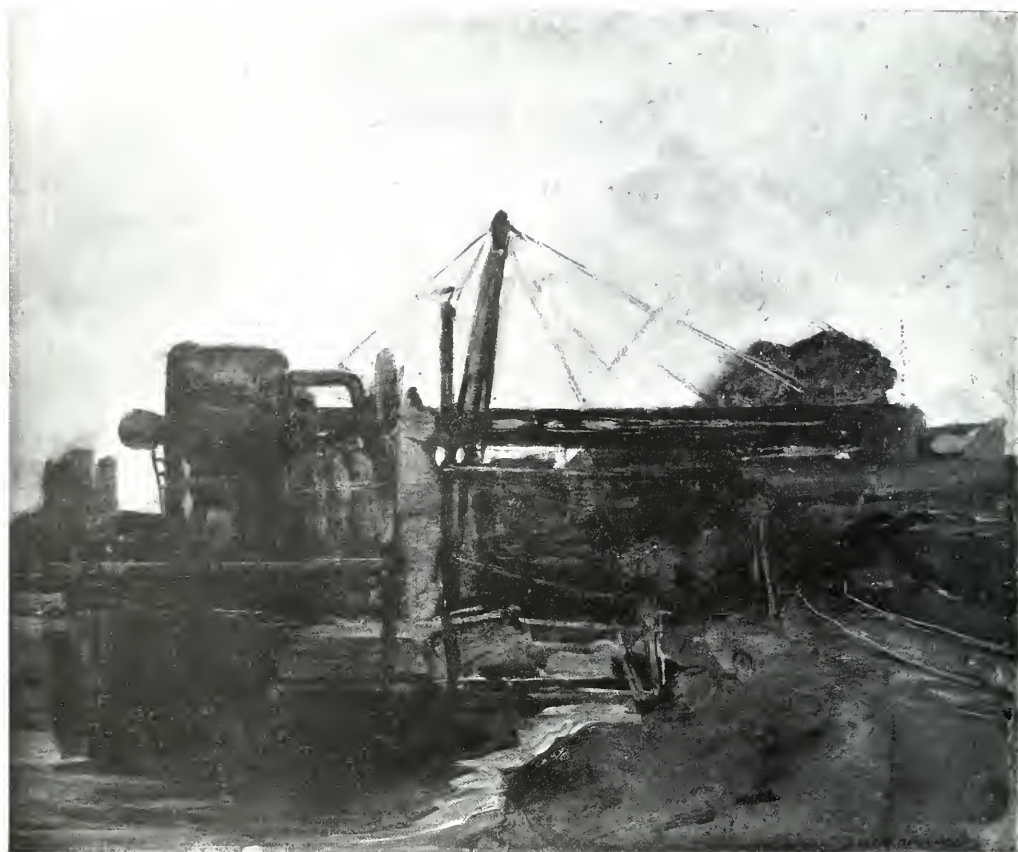
The River Gein: Willows – Am Gein: Weiden – Saules près du Gein (c. 1903)



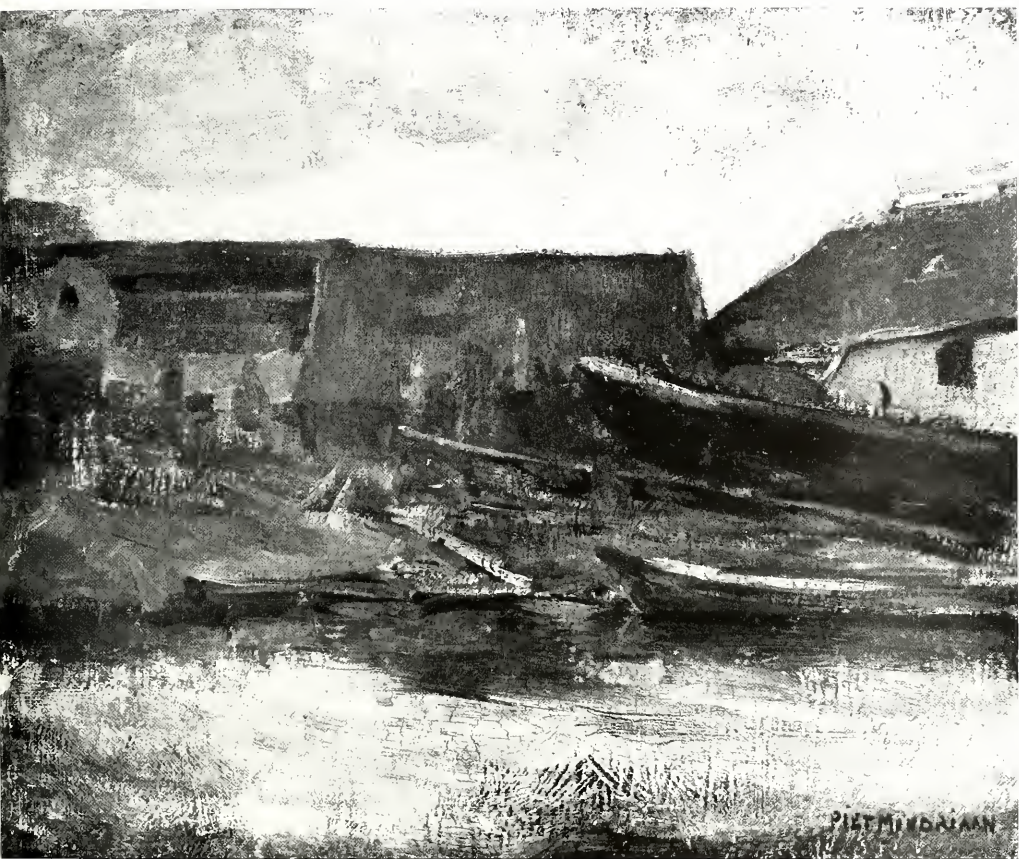
Woods – Waldlandschaft – Paysage de bois (c. 1903 05)



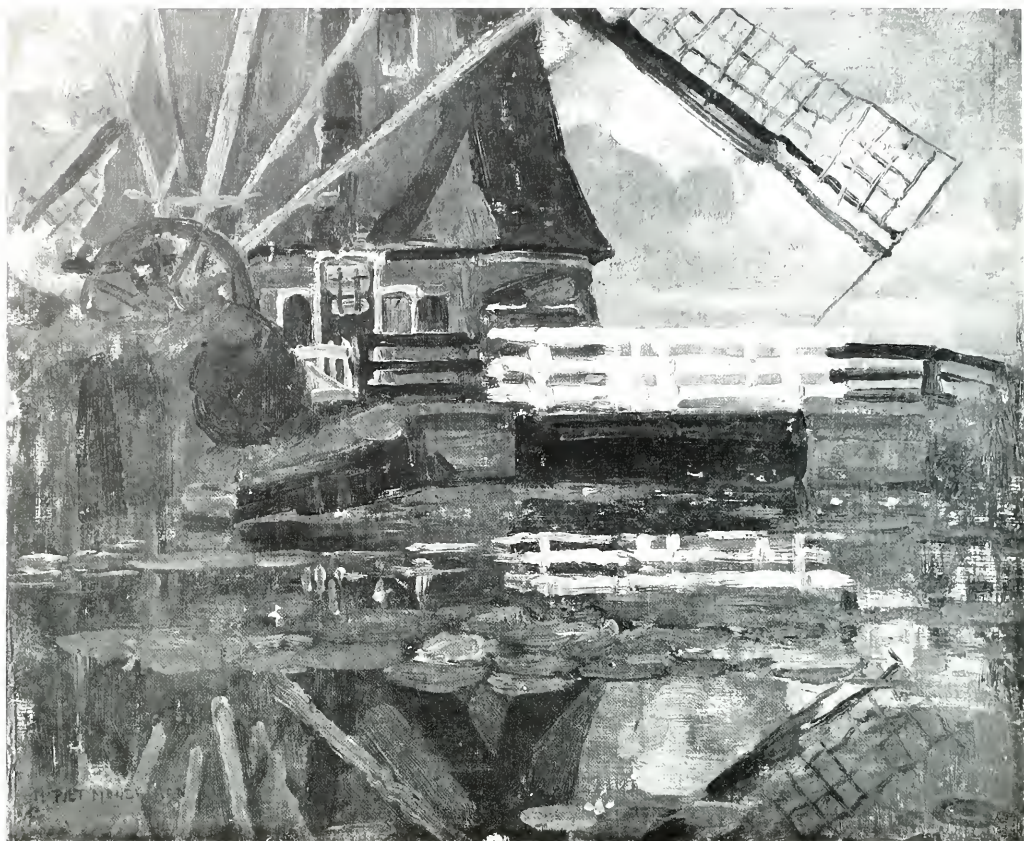
andscape – Landschaft – Paysage (c.1902-03)



Dredge in the Evening – Bagger am Abend – Cure-môle le soir (c. 1905)



Shipyard – Schiffswerft – Chantier (c. 1900)



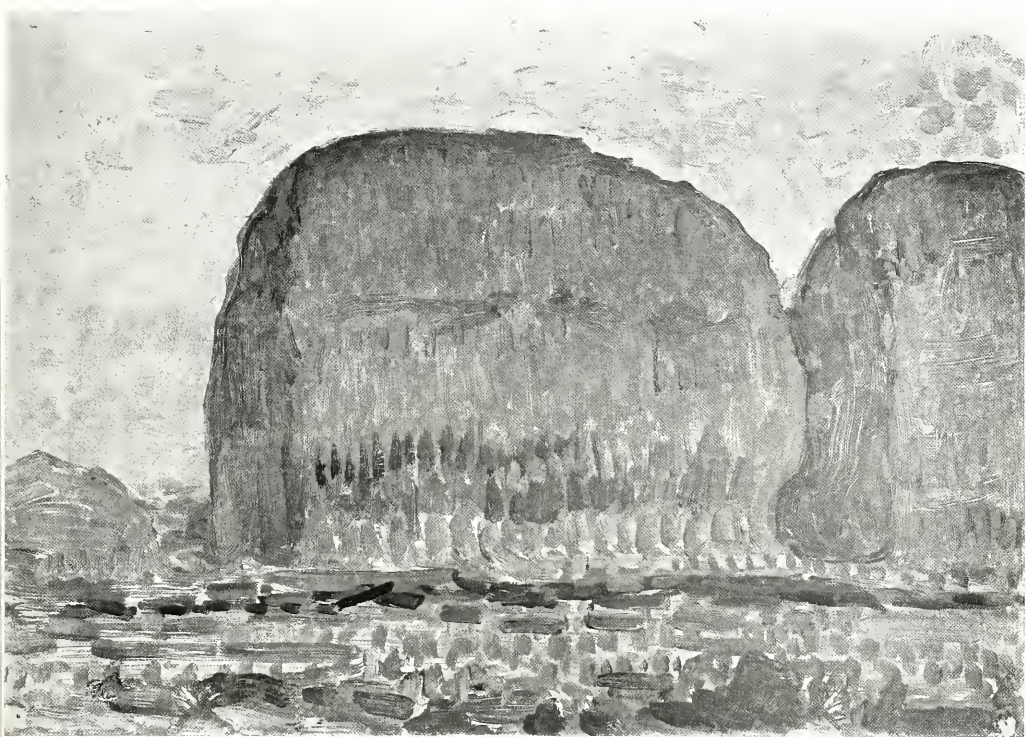
Mill by the Water – Mühle am Wasser – Moulin au bord de l'eau (c. 1900)



Mill by Lake – Mühle am See – Moulin au bord du lac (c. 1903-05)



Young Girl – Junges Mädchen – Fillette (c. 1908)



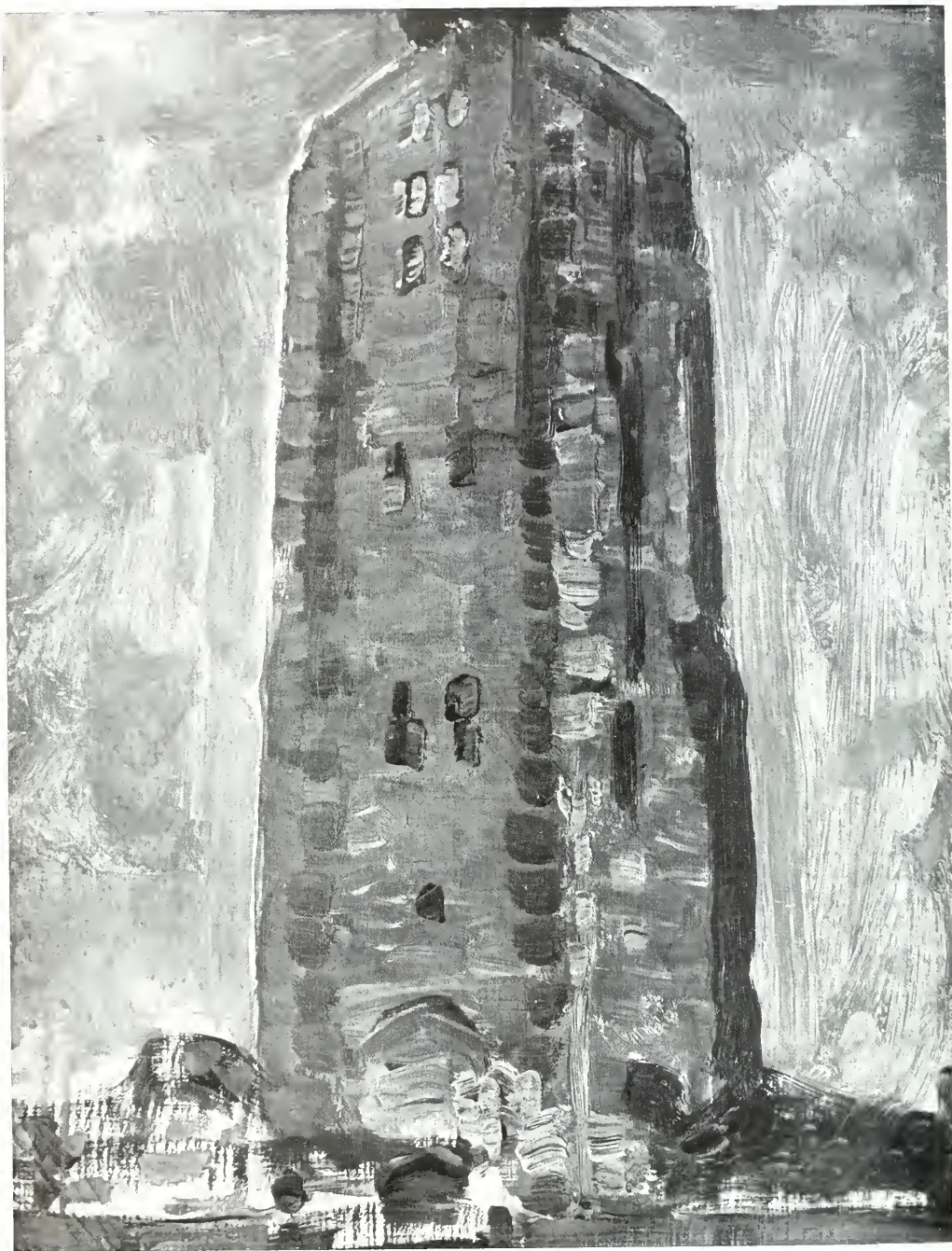
Hayricks - Heumieten - Meules (c. 1908)



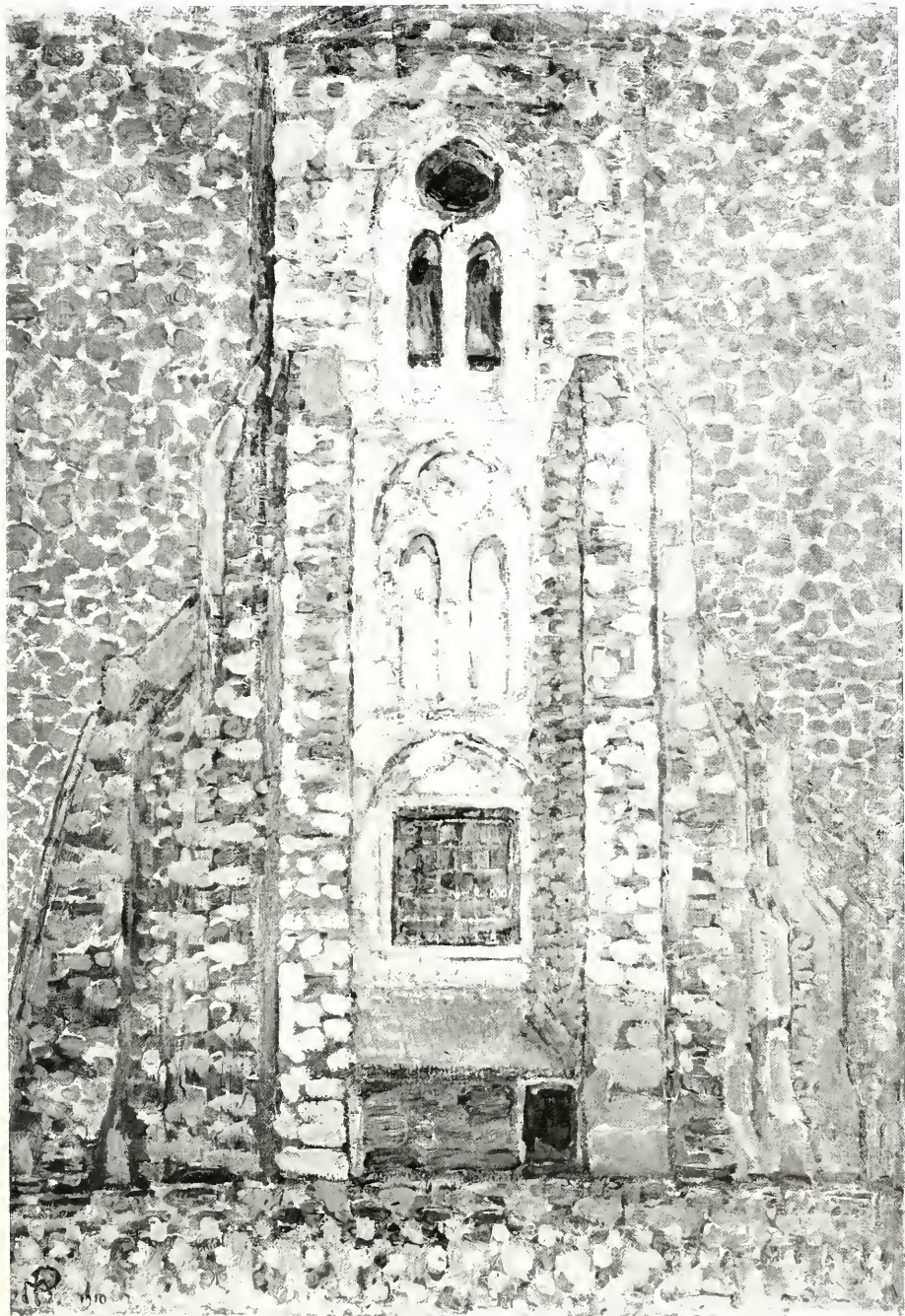
Lighthouse at Westkapelle – Leuchtturm Westkapelle – Tour-phare à Westkapelle (c. 1909)



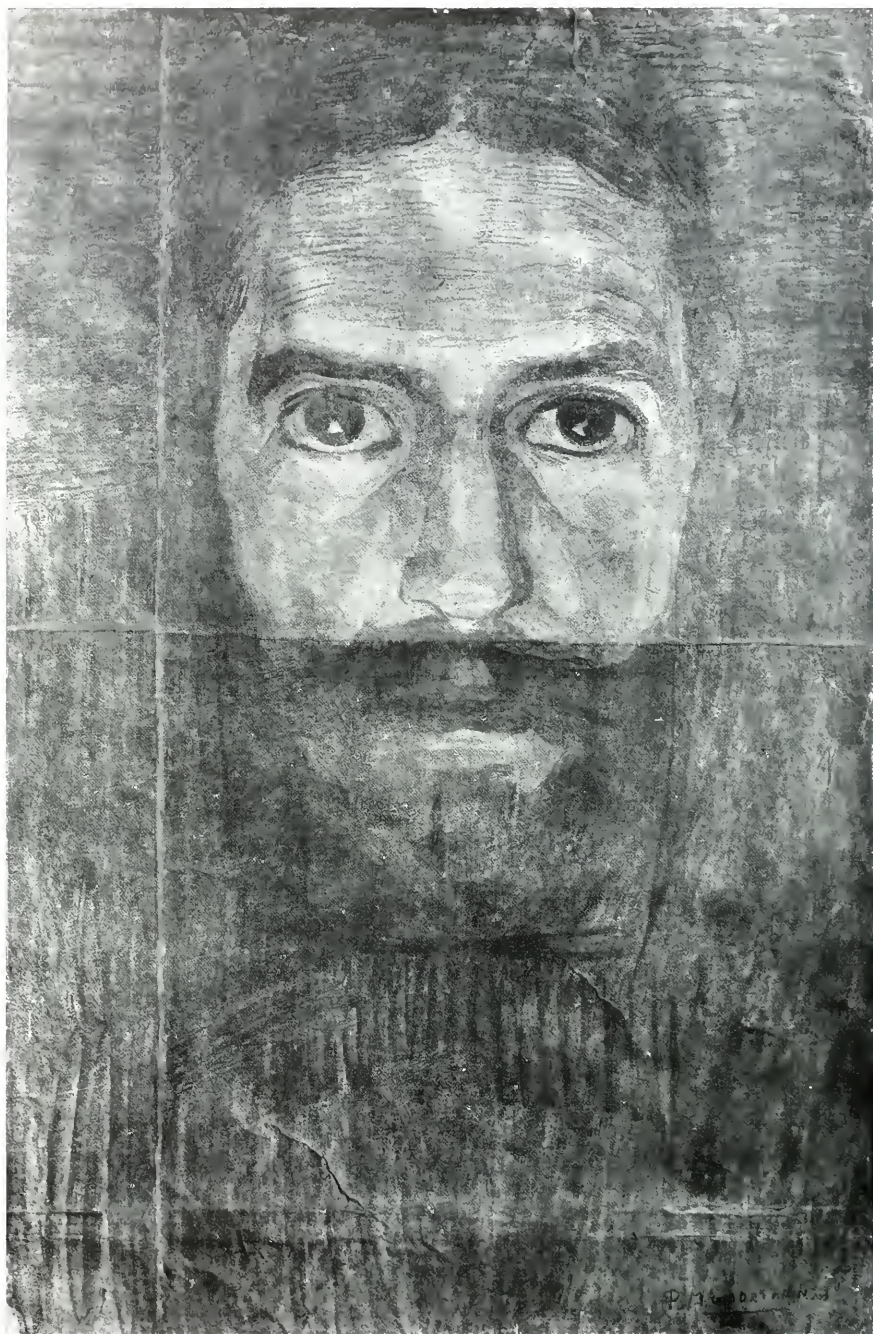
Lighthouse at Westkapelle – Leuchtturm Westkapelle – Tour-phare à Westkapelle (c. 1909)



Lighthouse at Westkapelle – Leuchtturm Westkapelle – Tour-phare à Westkapelle (c.1910)



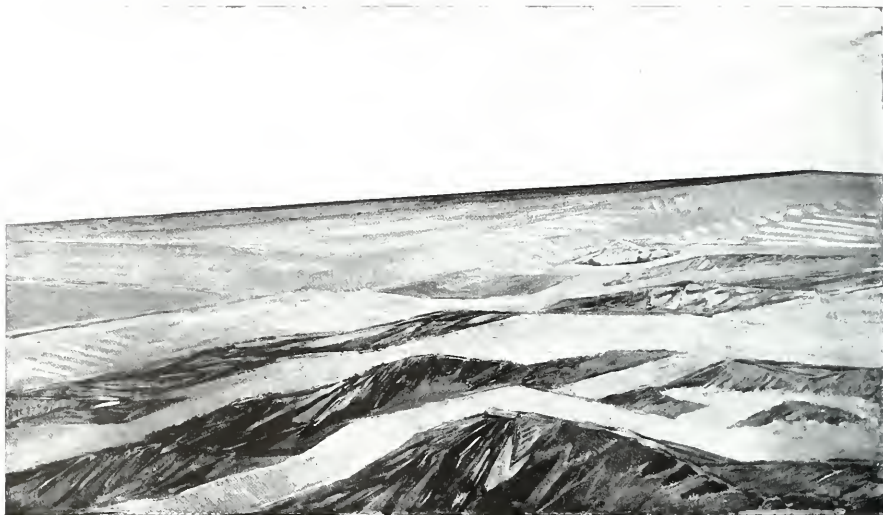
Church Tower (in Zoutelande, Walcheren) – Kirchturm (im Zoutelande auf Walcheren)
Tour de l'église (à Zoutelande sur Walcheren) (1910)



Self-Portrait – Selbstportrat – Portrait du peintre par lui-même (c. 1908)



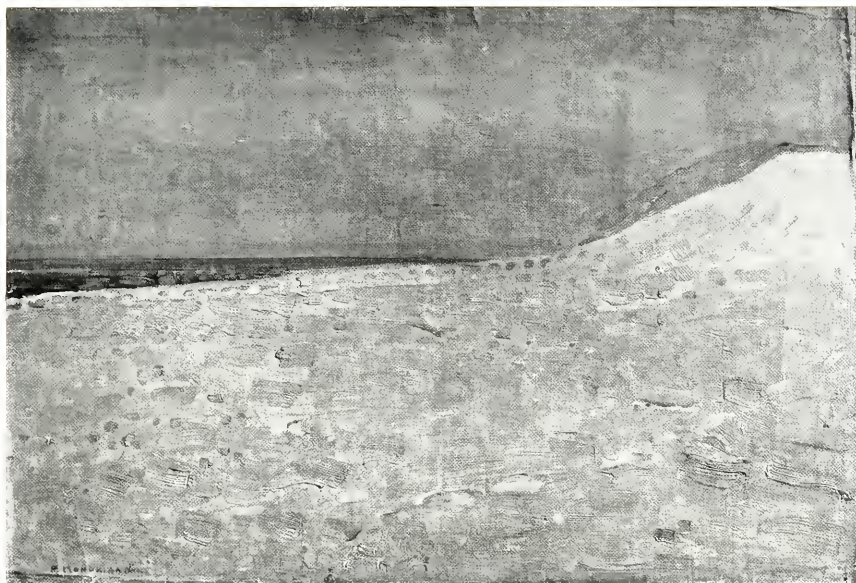
Evolution (Triptych) – Evolution (Triptychon) – Evolution (Tryptique) (c. 1911)



Dune – Dune – Dune (c. 1910)



Beach near Domburg – Strand bei Domburg – La plage à Domburg (c. 1910)



Dune - Düne - Dune (c. 1909-10)



Dune - Düne - Dune (c. 1910)



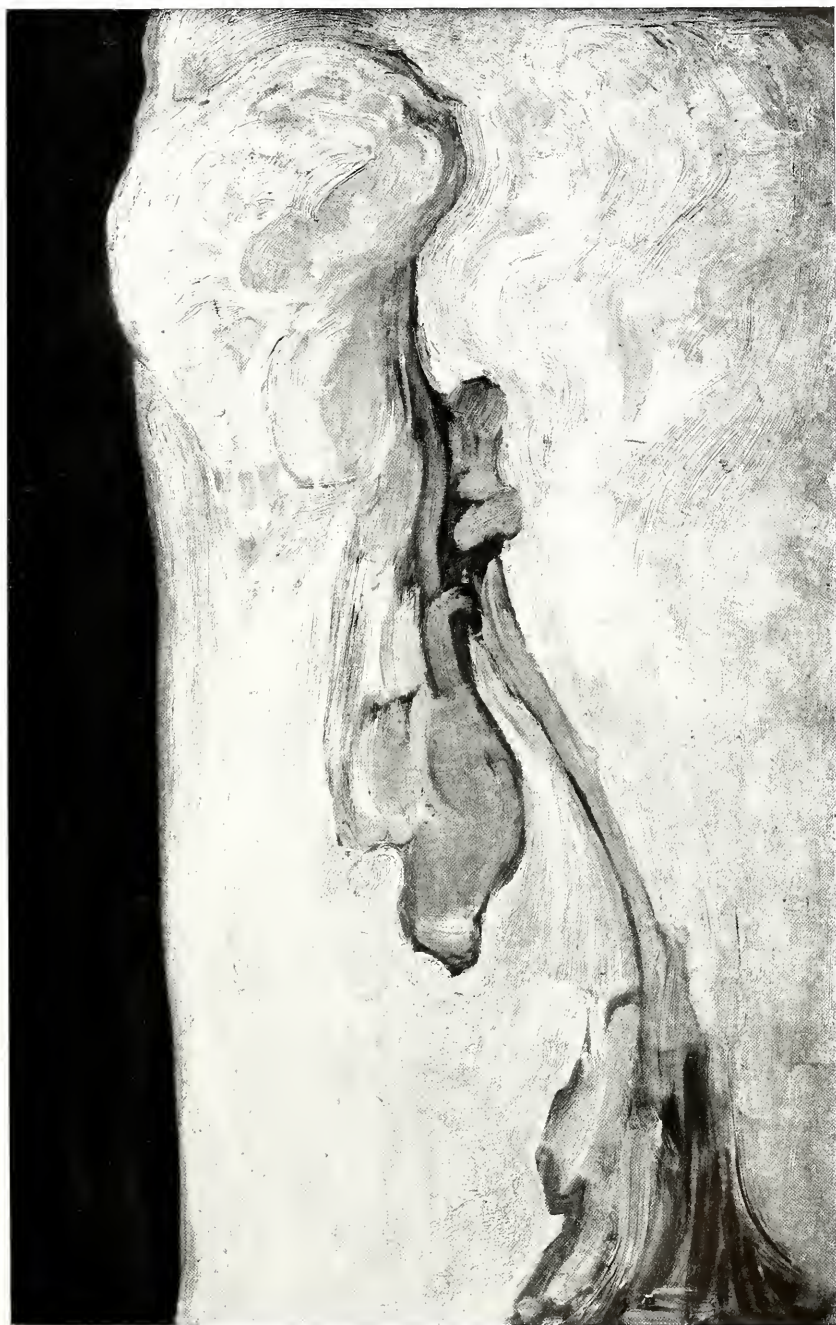
Mill near Domburg – Mühle bei Domburg – Moulin à Domburg (c. 1910)



Calla Lily - Aronstab - Arum (c.1910)



Chrysanthemums – Chrysanthemen – Chrysanthèmes (c. 1908 10)



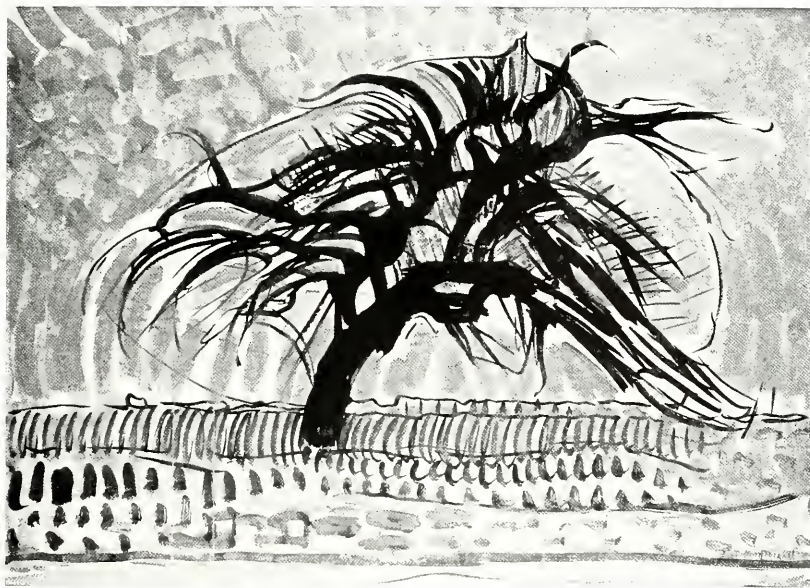
Dying Chrysanthemum – Sterbende Chrysantheme – Chrysanthème mourant (c. 1907/08)



Tree – Baum – Arbre (c. 1909 10)



The Red Tree – Der rote Baum – L'arbre rouge (1909)



Tree – Baum – Arbre (1909-10)



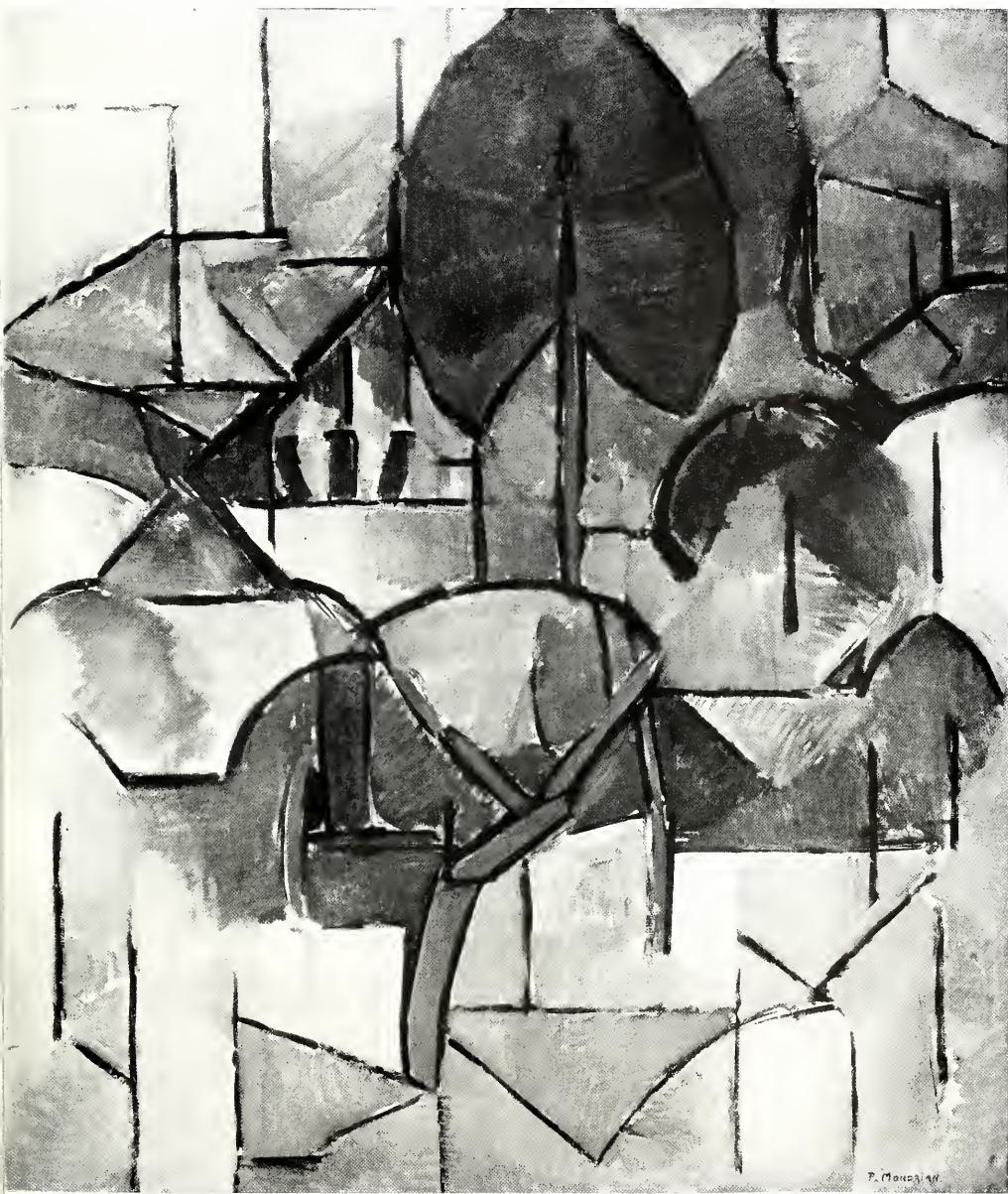
The Blue Tree – Der blaue Baum – L'arbre bleu (1909-1910)



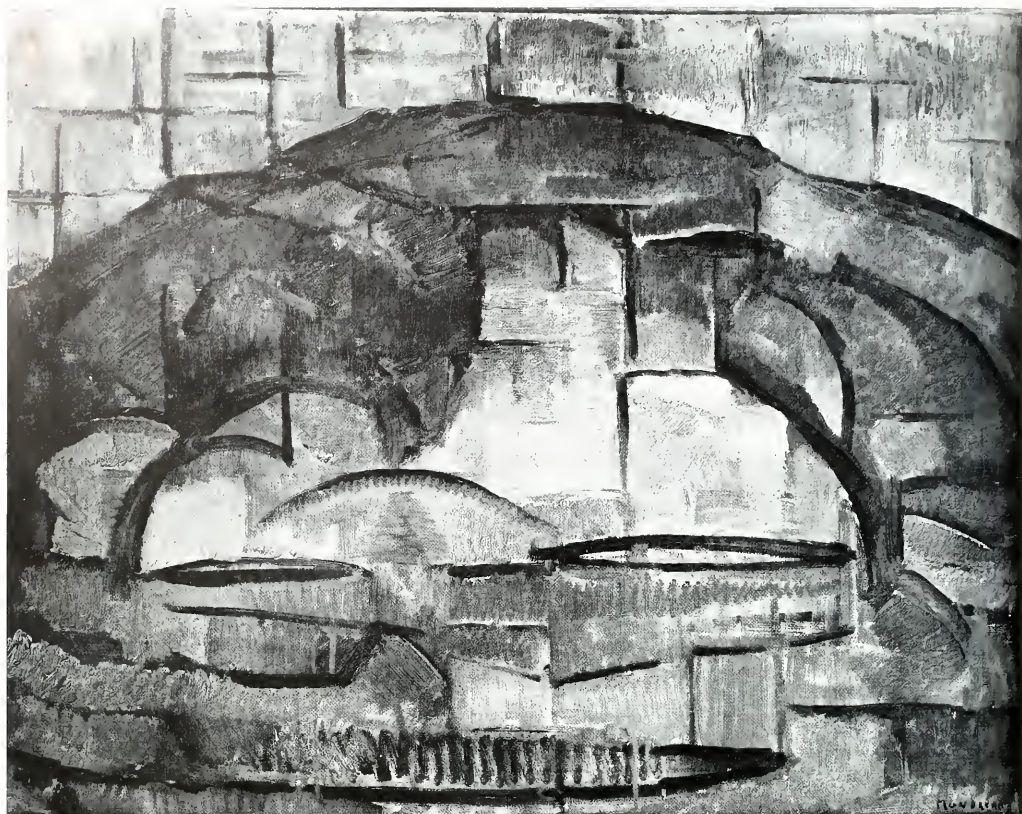
Trees – Baume – Arbres (c. 1911)



The Gray Tree – Der graue Baum – L'arbre argenté (1911)



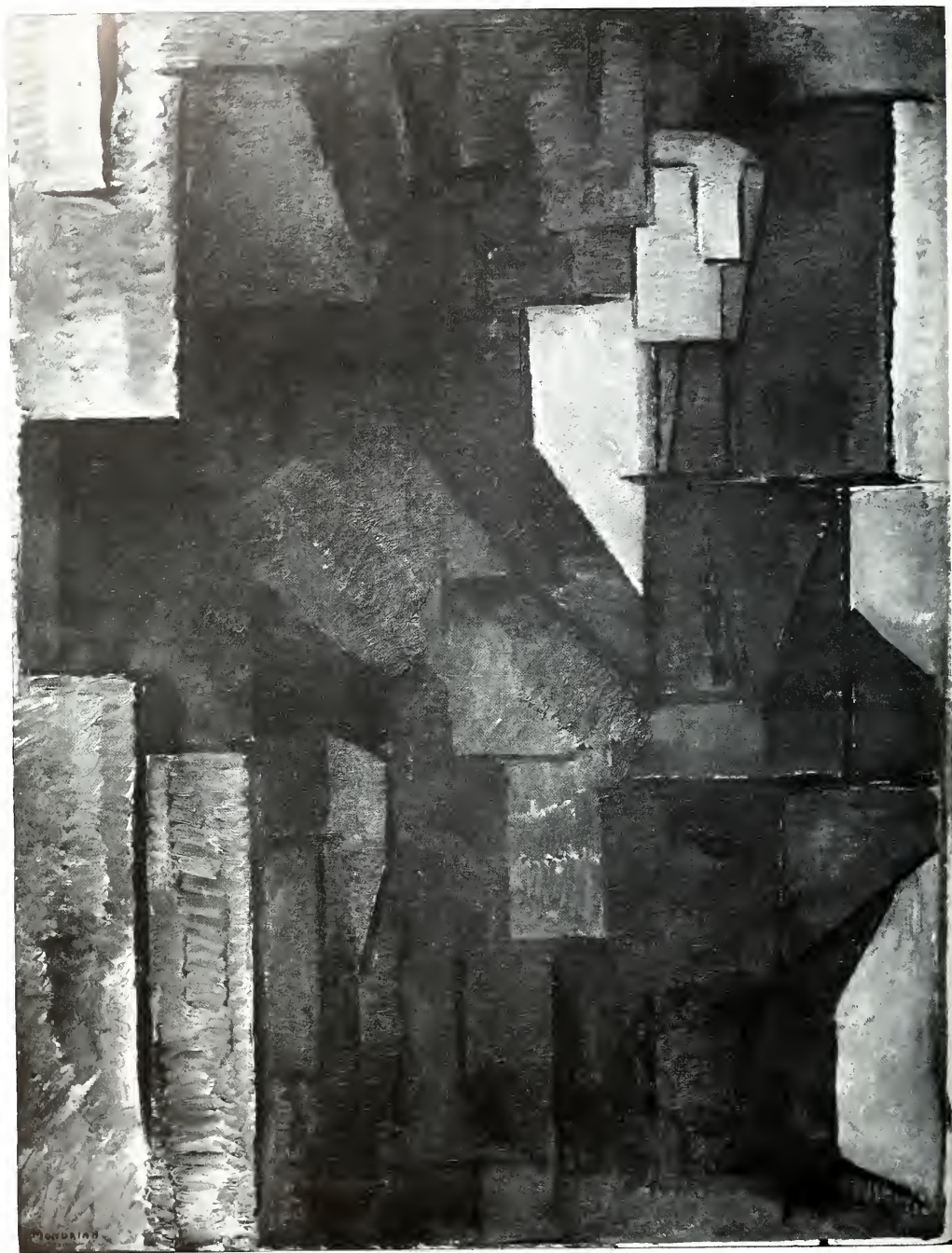
Landscape with Trees – Landschaft mit Bäumen – Paysage avec arbres (c. 1912)



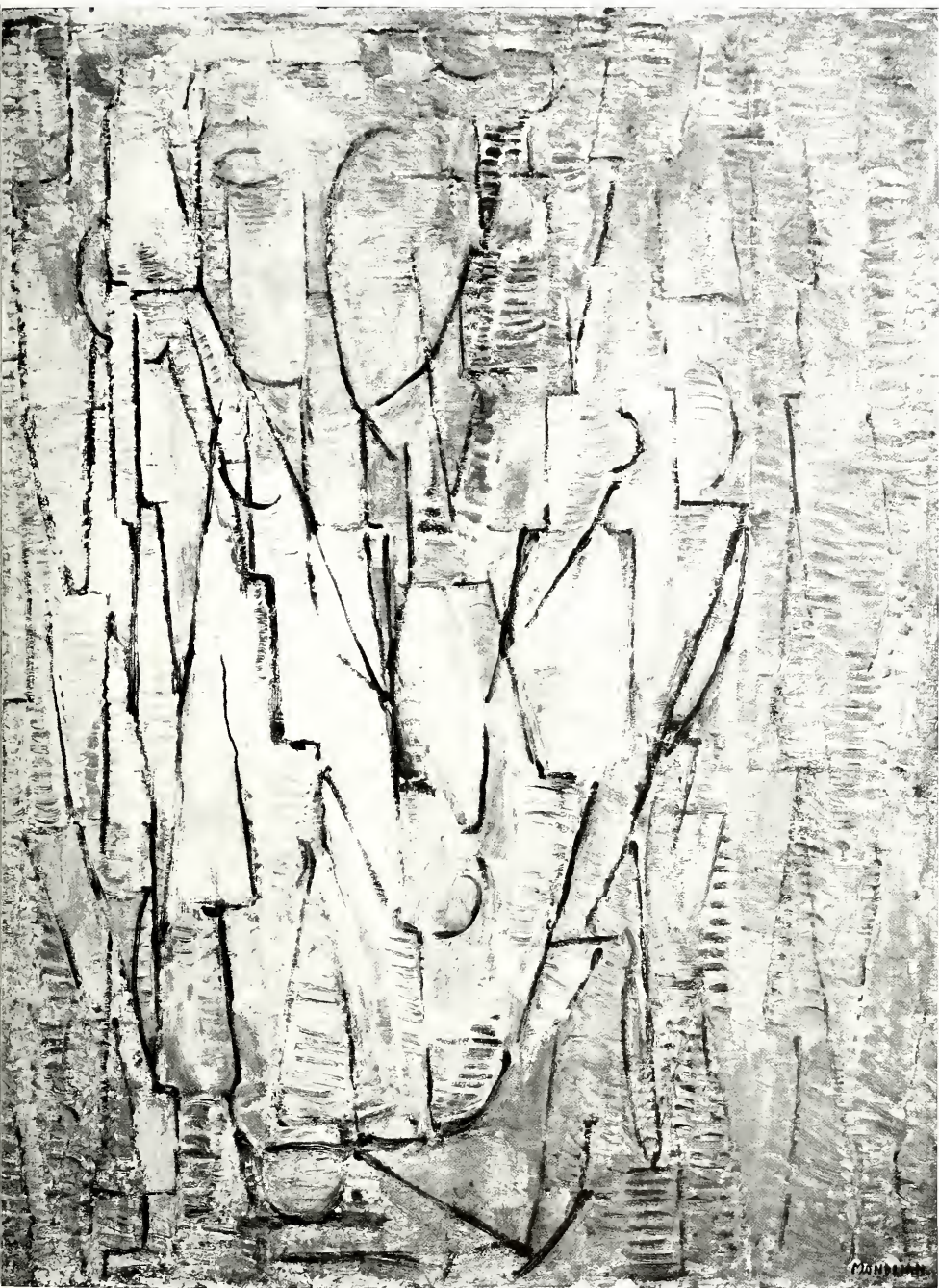
Landscape – Landschaft – Paysage (c. 1912)



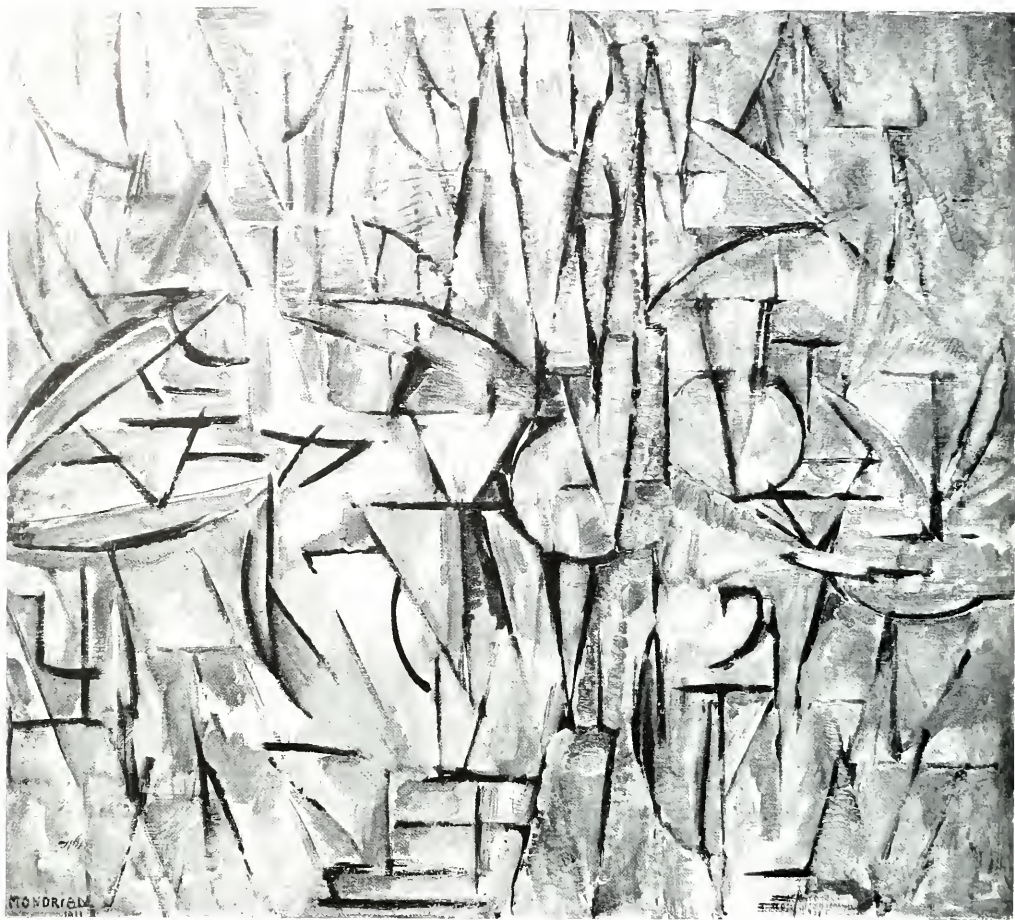
Still Life with Gingerpot I – Stilleben mit Ingwertopf I – Nature morte avec pot de gingembre I (1912)



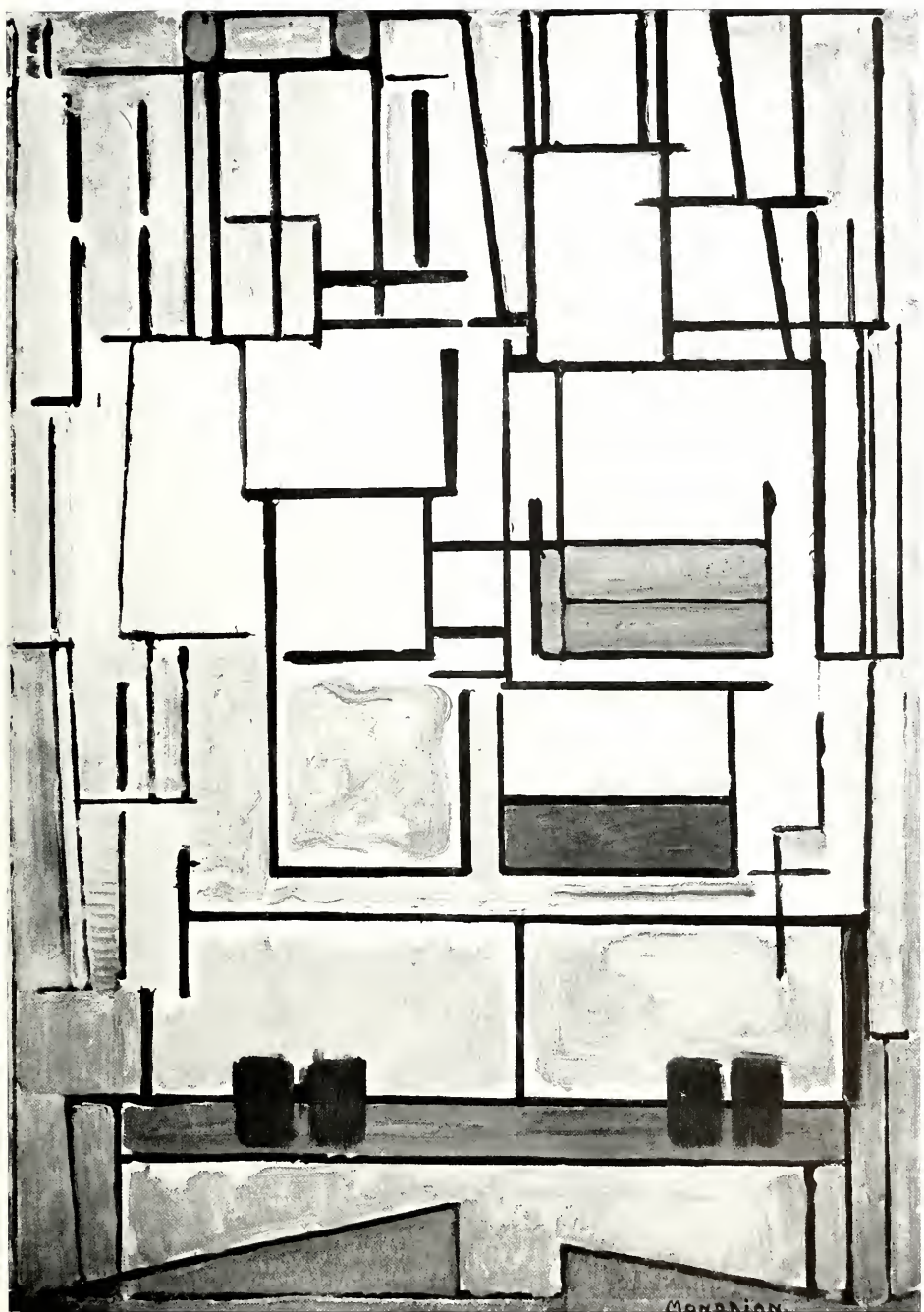
Female Figure – Weibliche Figur – Femme (c. 1912)



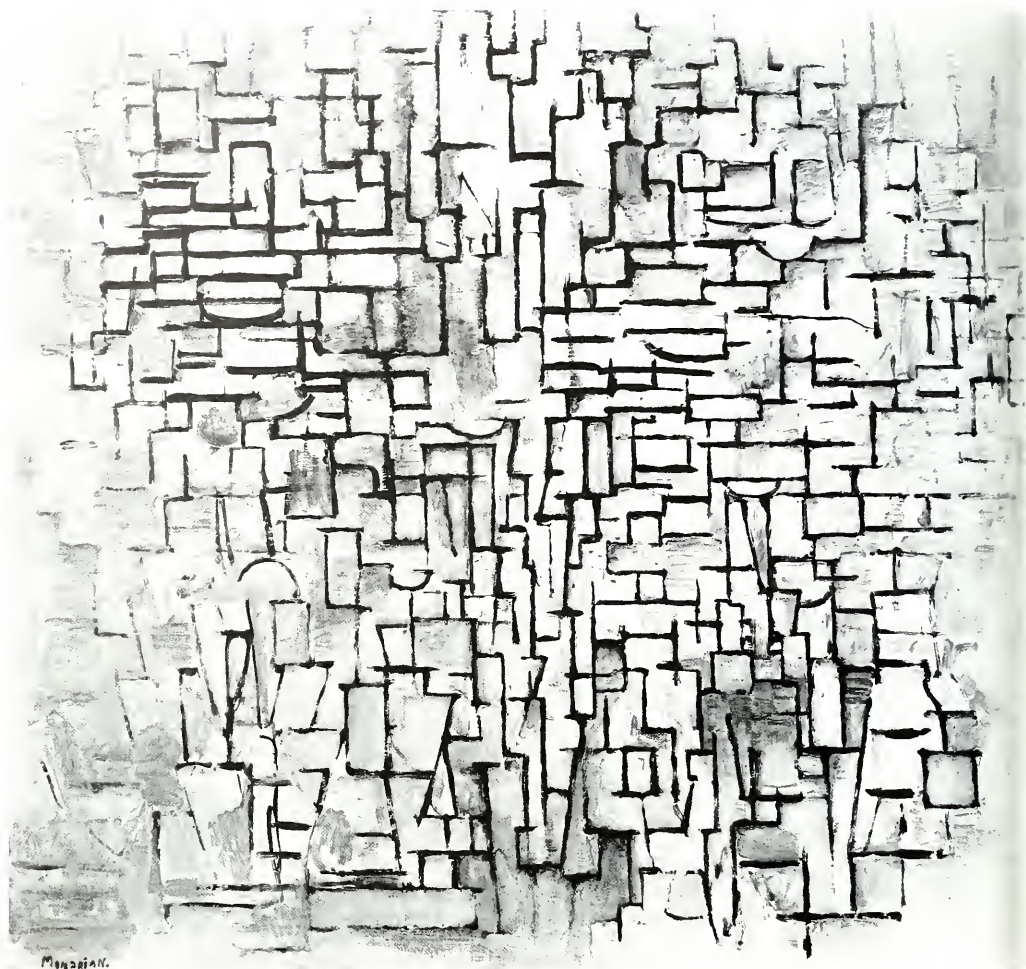
Composition No. 11 – Komposition Nr. 11 – Composition No. 11 (c. 1912)



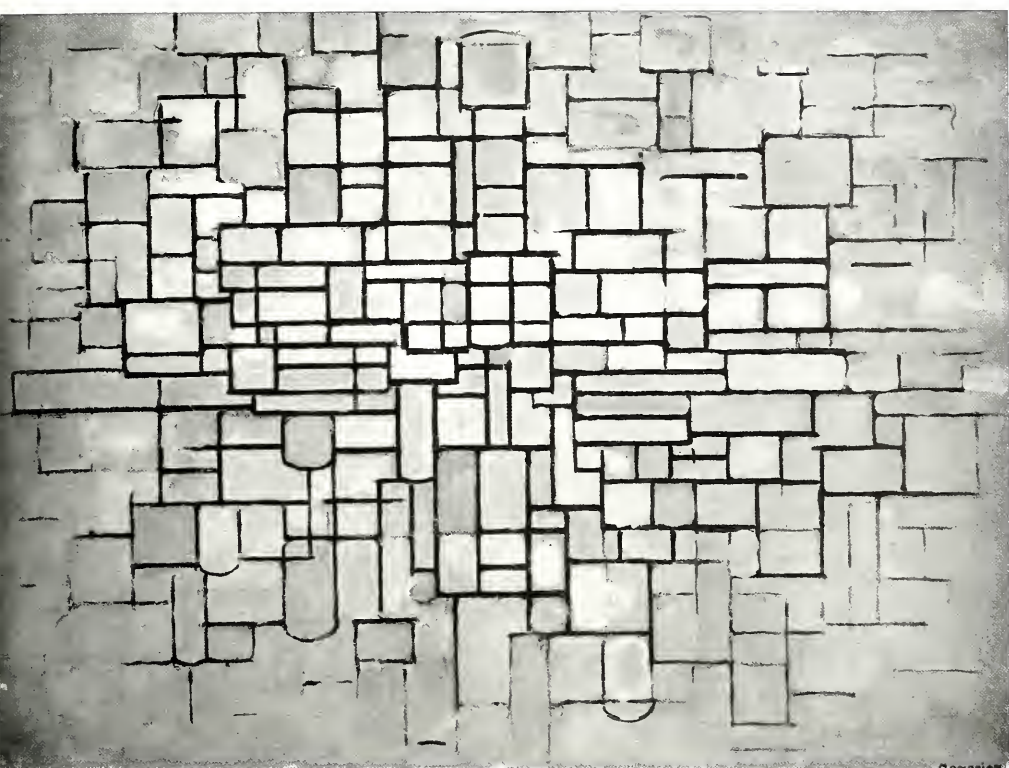
Appletree – Apfelbaum – Pommier (c. 1912)



Composition No.9 (Façade) – Komposition Nr. 9 (Fassade) – Composition No. 9 (Façade) (c. 1913)



Composition No. 7 – Komposition Nr. 7 – Composition No. 7 (1913)



Composition in Blue, Gray and Pink – Komposition in Blau, Grau und Rosa – Composition en bleu, gris et rose (1913)

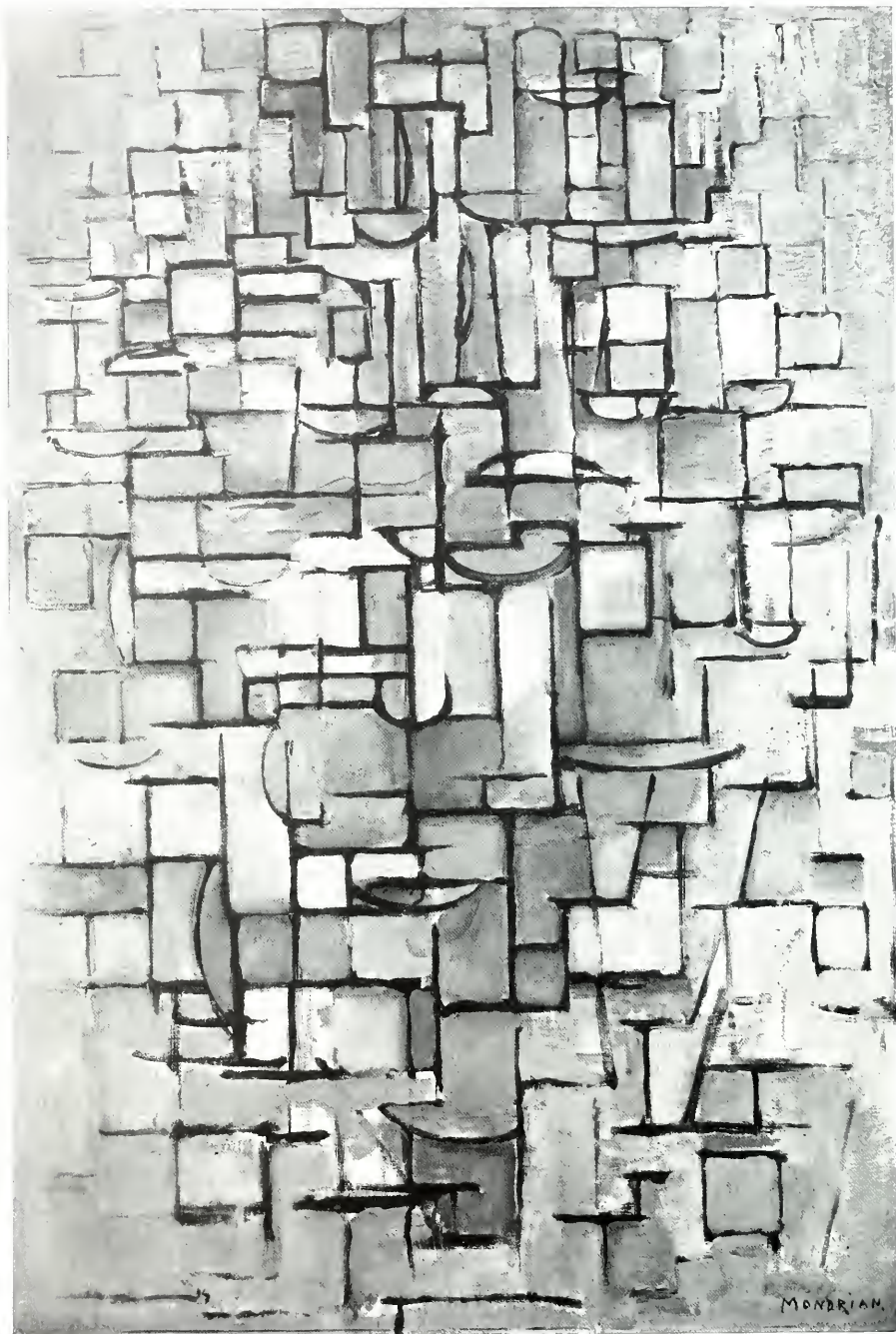
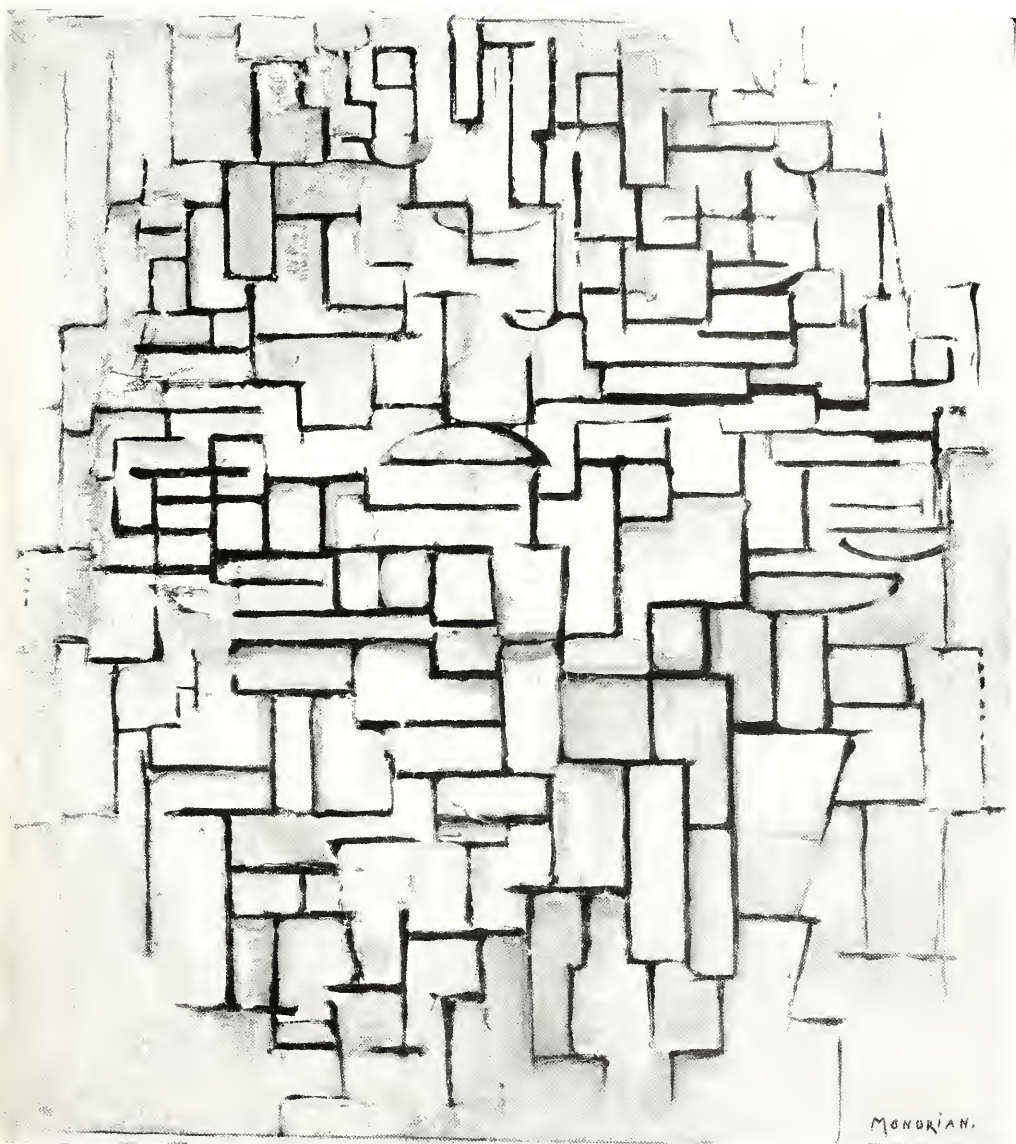
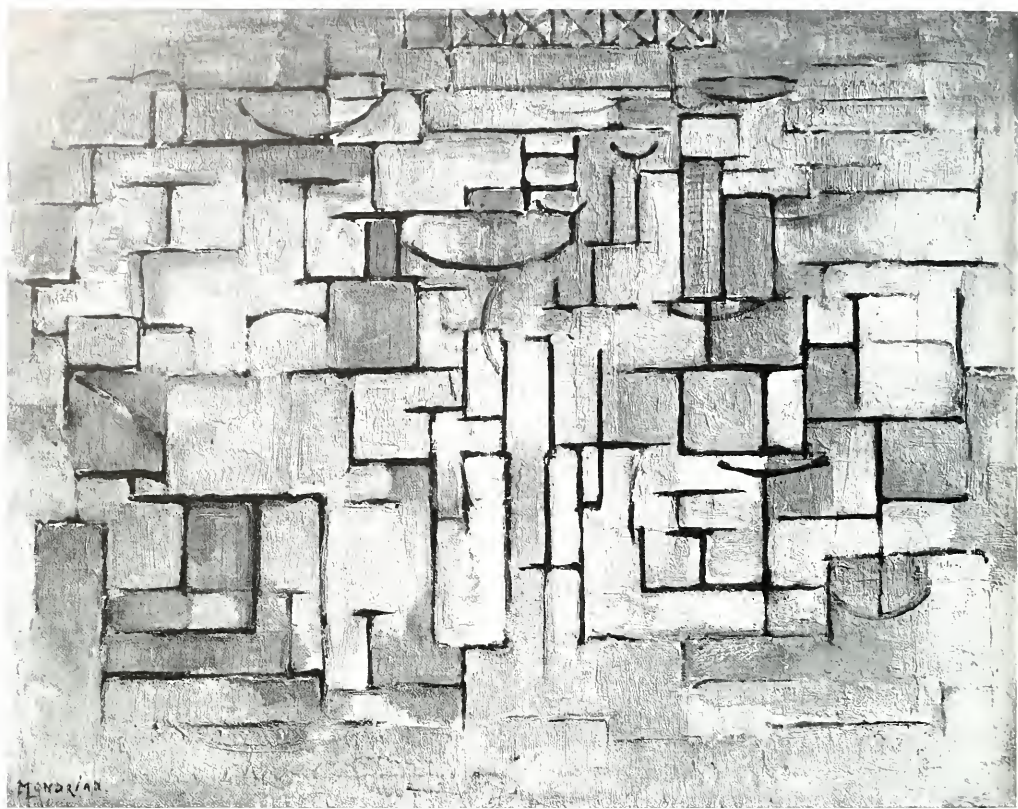


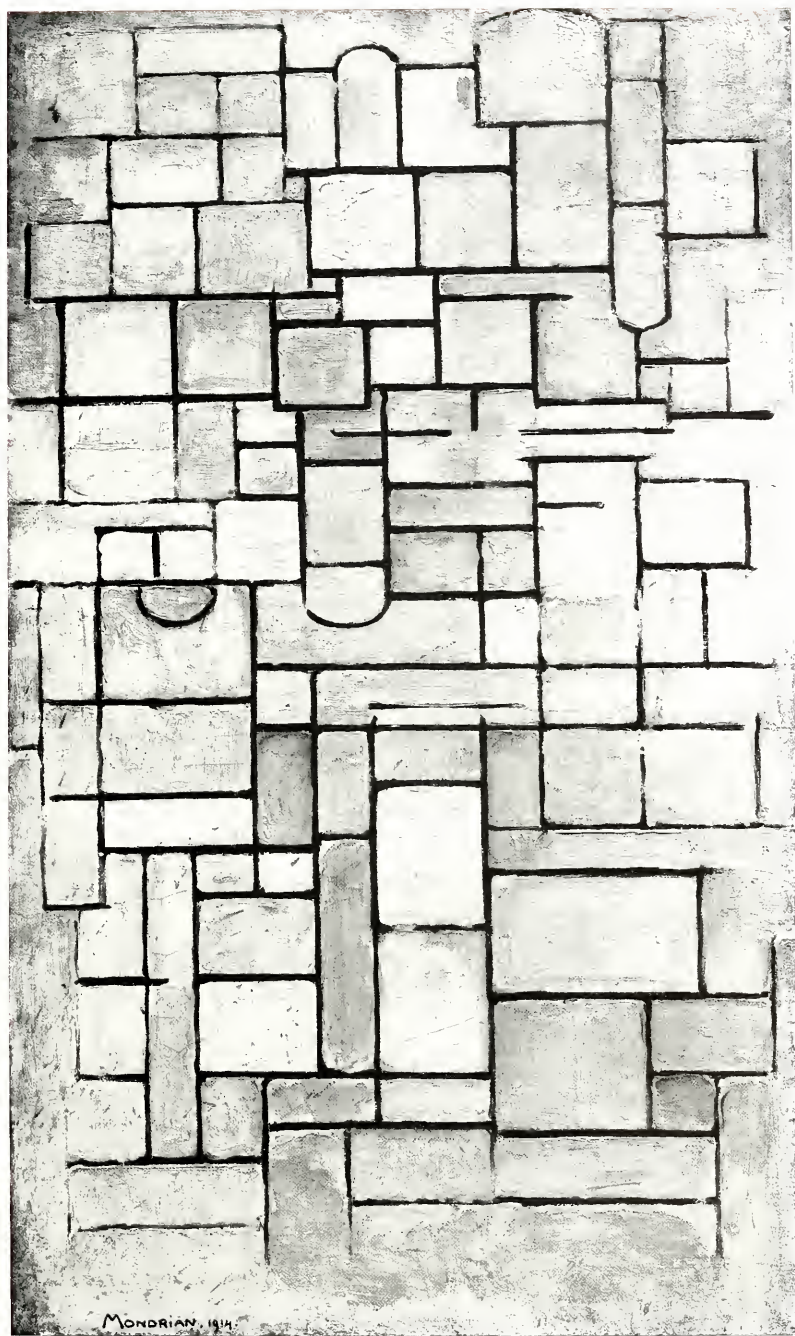
Tableau I (1913)



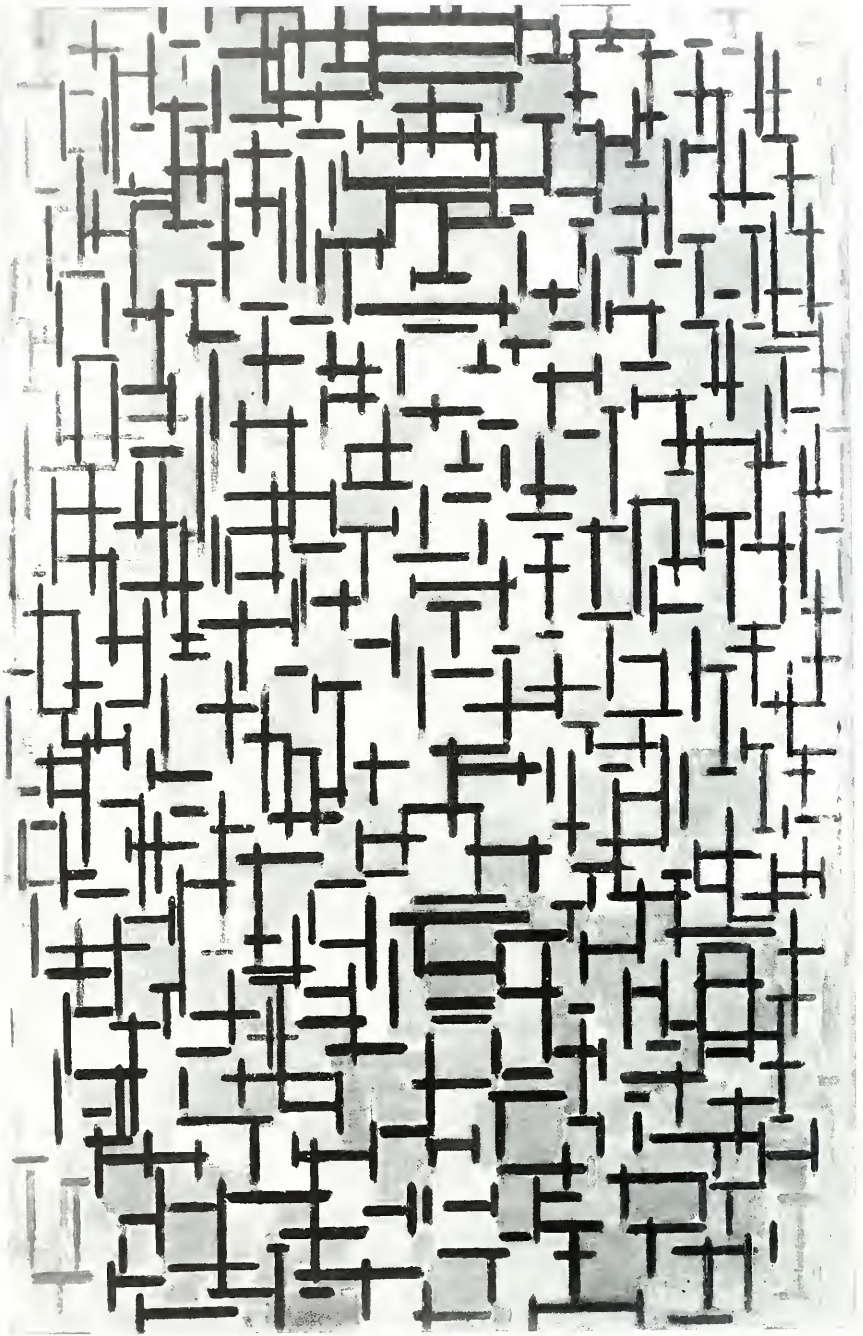
Composition in Brown and Gray – Komposition in Braun und Grau – Composition en brun et gris (c. 1913)



Composition in Gray and Yellow – Komposition in Grau und Gelb – Composition en gris et jaune (1914)



Composition No. 8 – Komposition Nr. 8 – Composition No. 8 (1914)



Composition – Komposition – Composition (1916)



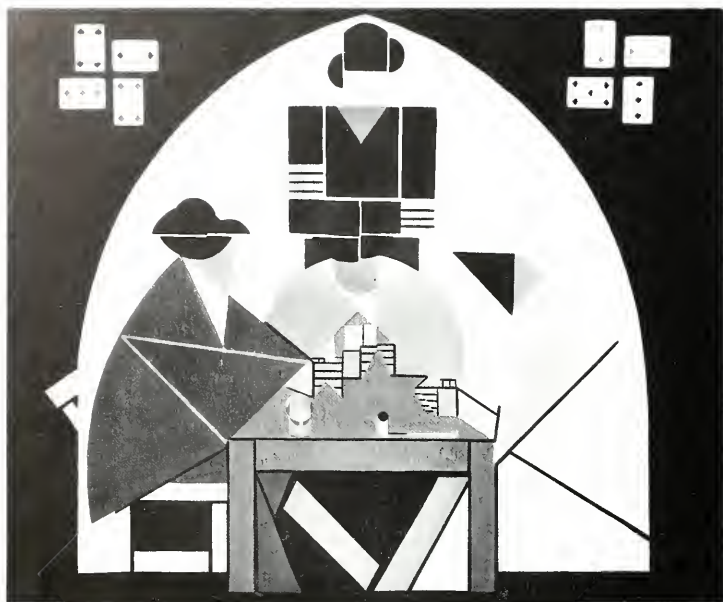
Theo van Doesburg (c. 1923)



Bart van der Leek (c. 1925)



Bart van der Leek in his studio at Blaricum, 1950 – Bart van der Leek in seinem Atelier in Blaricum, 1950
Bart van der Leek dans son atelier à Blaricum en 1950



Van Doesburg: Card Players – Kartenspieler – Joueurs de cartes (1916–1917)



Van Doesburg: Abstract version of "Card Players" (Composition 9)
 Abstraktion der «Kartenspieler» (Komposition 9)
 Transposition abstraite des «Joueurs de cartes» (Composition 9) (1917)



Piet Mondrian: Donkey Riders – Eselreiter – Hommes montés sur des ânes



Piet Mondrian: Abstract version of "Donkey Riders" (Composition No. 6)

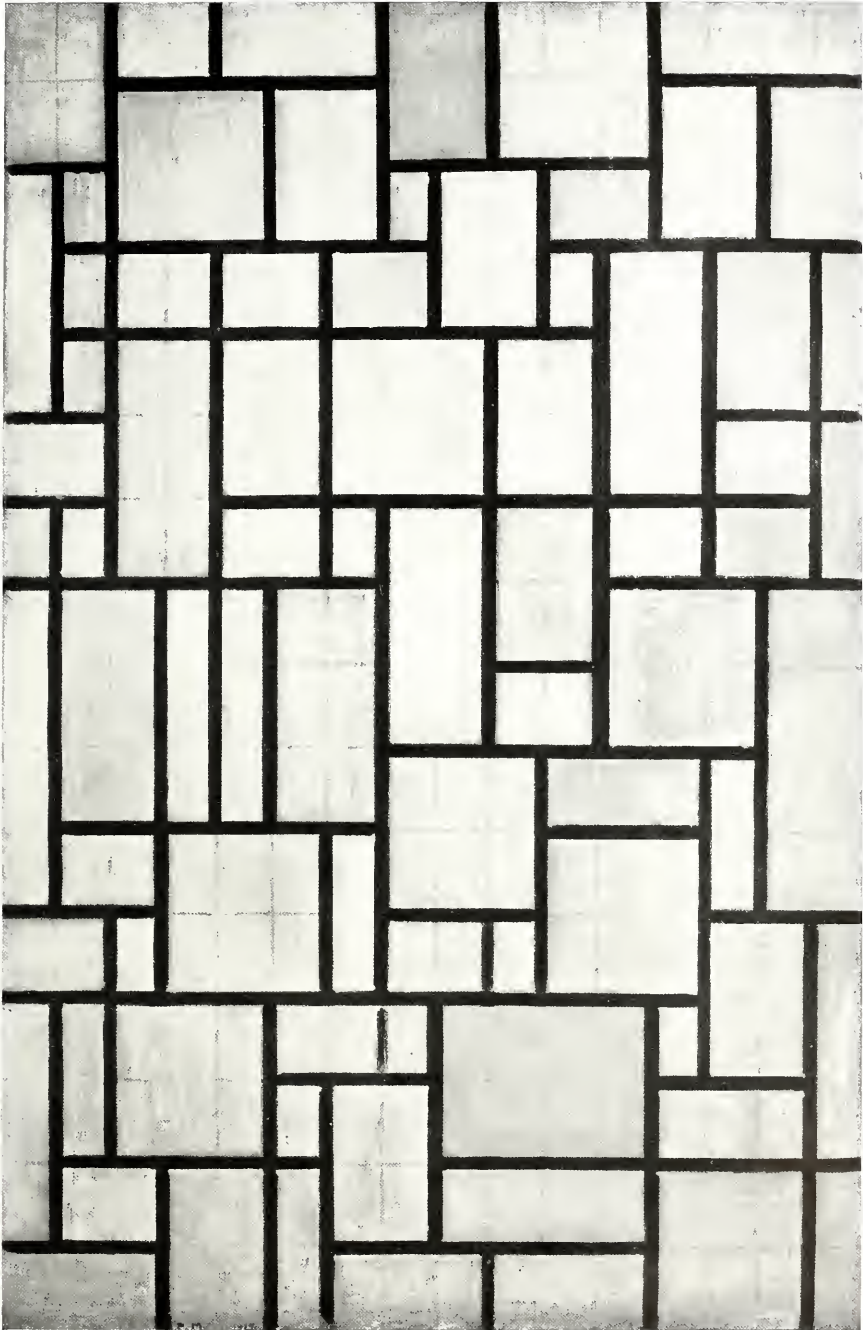
Abstraktion der «Eselreiter» (Komposition Nr. 6)

Transposition abstraite des «Hommes montés sur des ânes» (Composition No. 6) (1917)

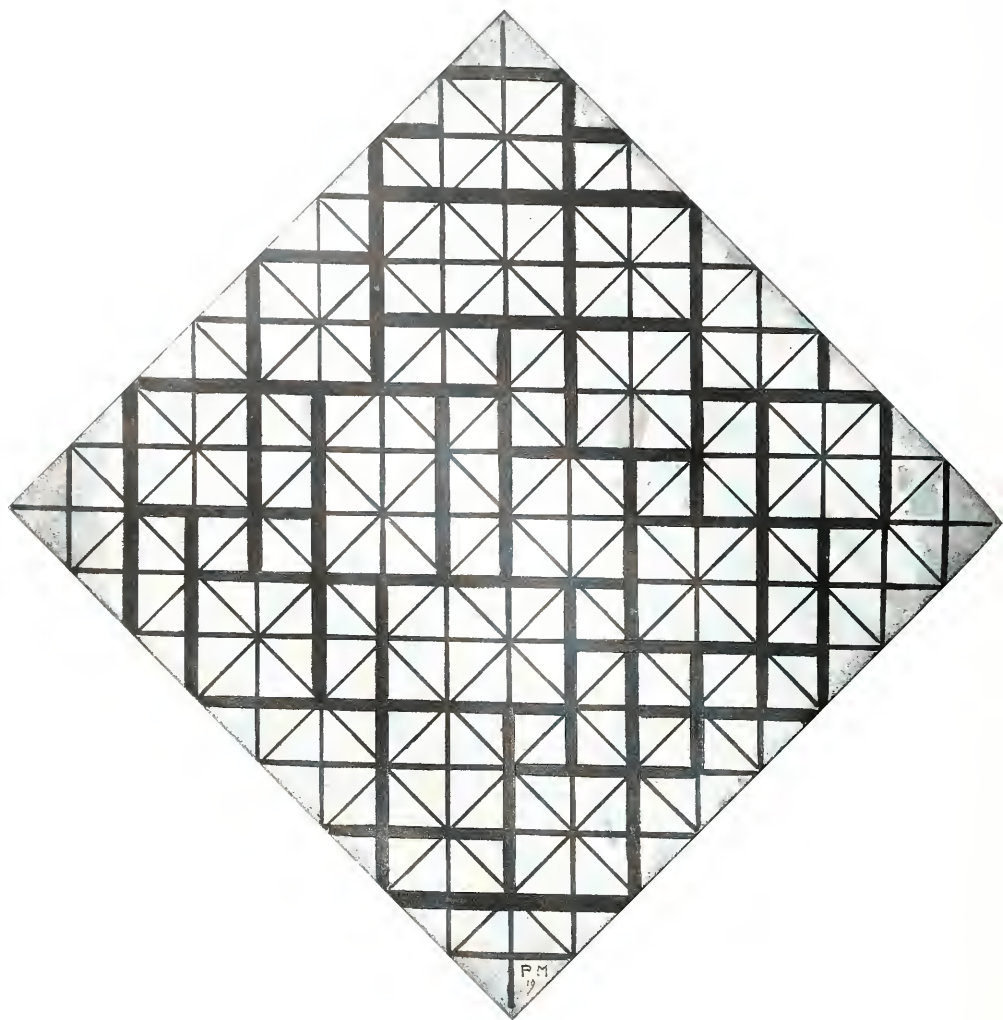


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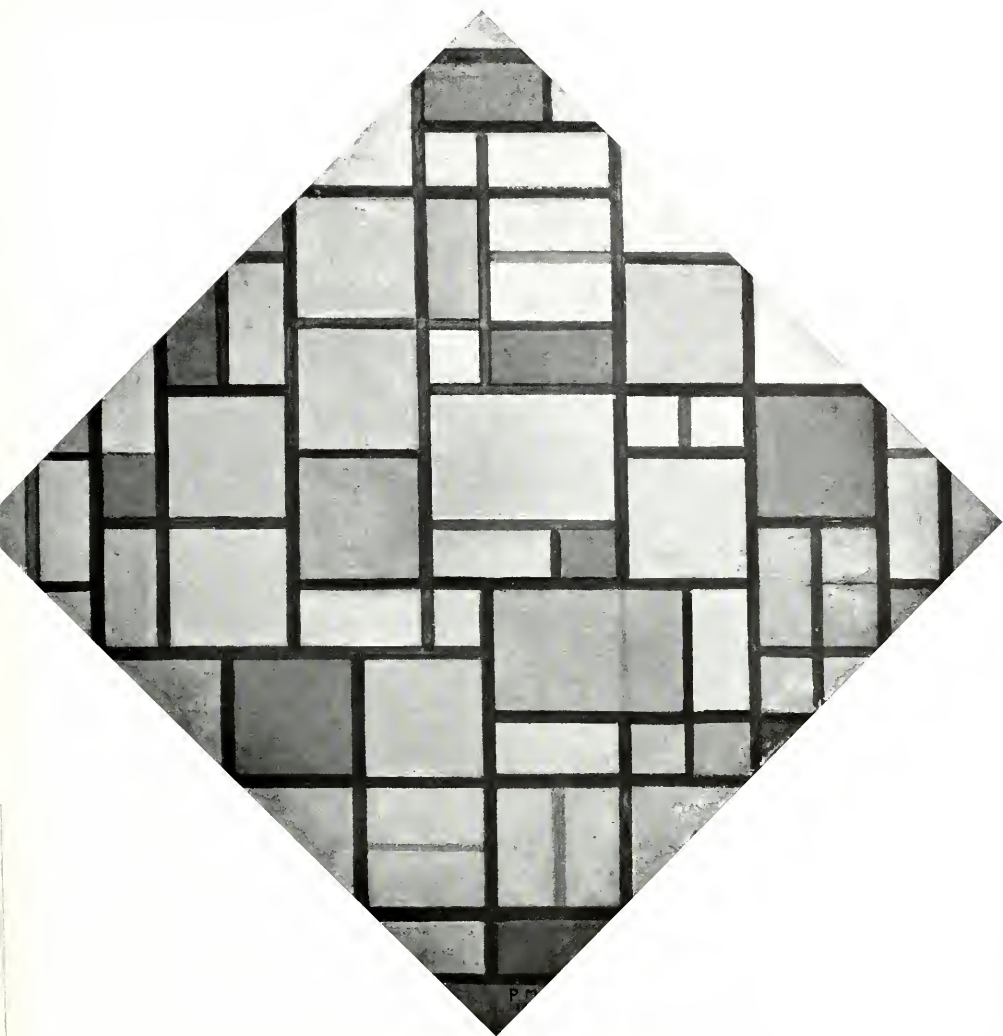
Composition in Blue, B – Komposition in Blau, B – Composition en bleu, B (1917)



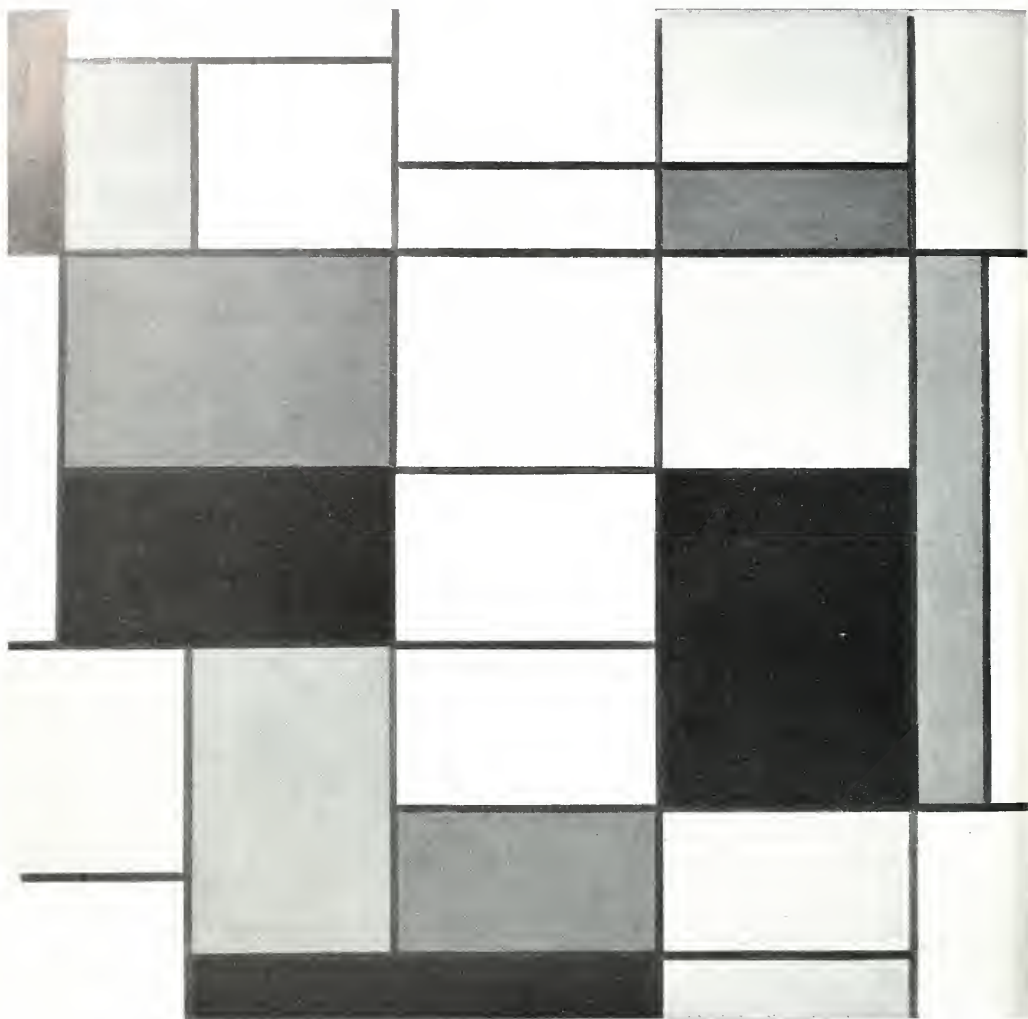
Composition in Gray – Komposition in Grau – Composition en gris (1919)



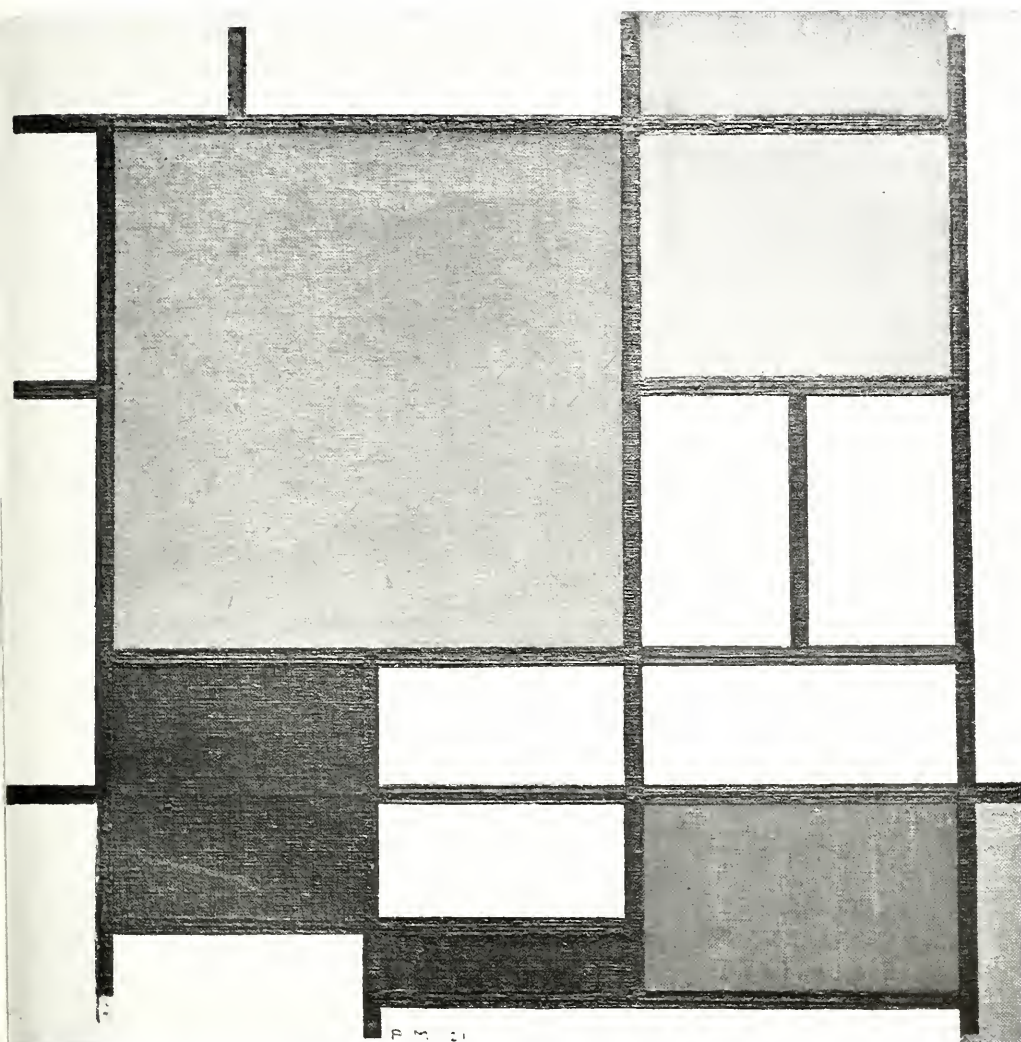
Lozenge (with gray lines) – Raute (mit grauen Linien) – Composition dans le carreau (avec lignes grises) (1919)



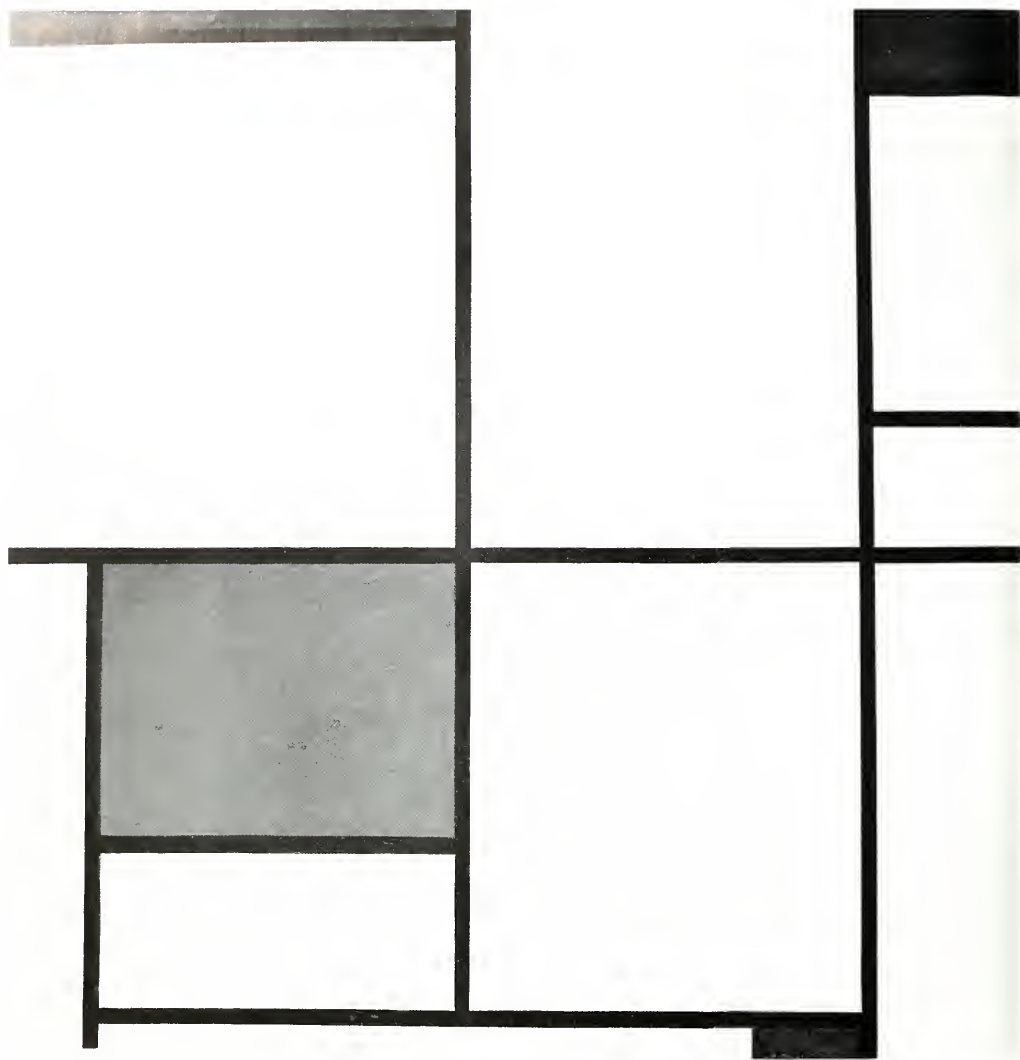
Lozenge – Raute – Composition dans le carreau (1919)



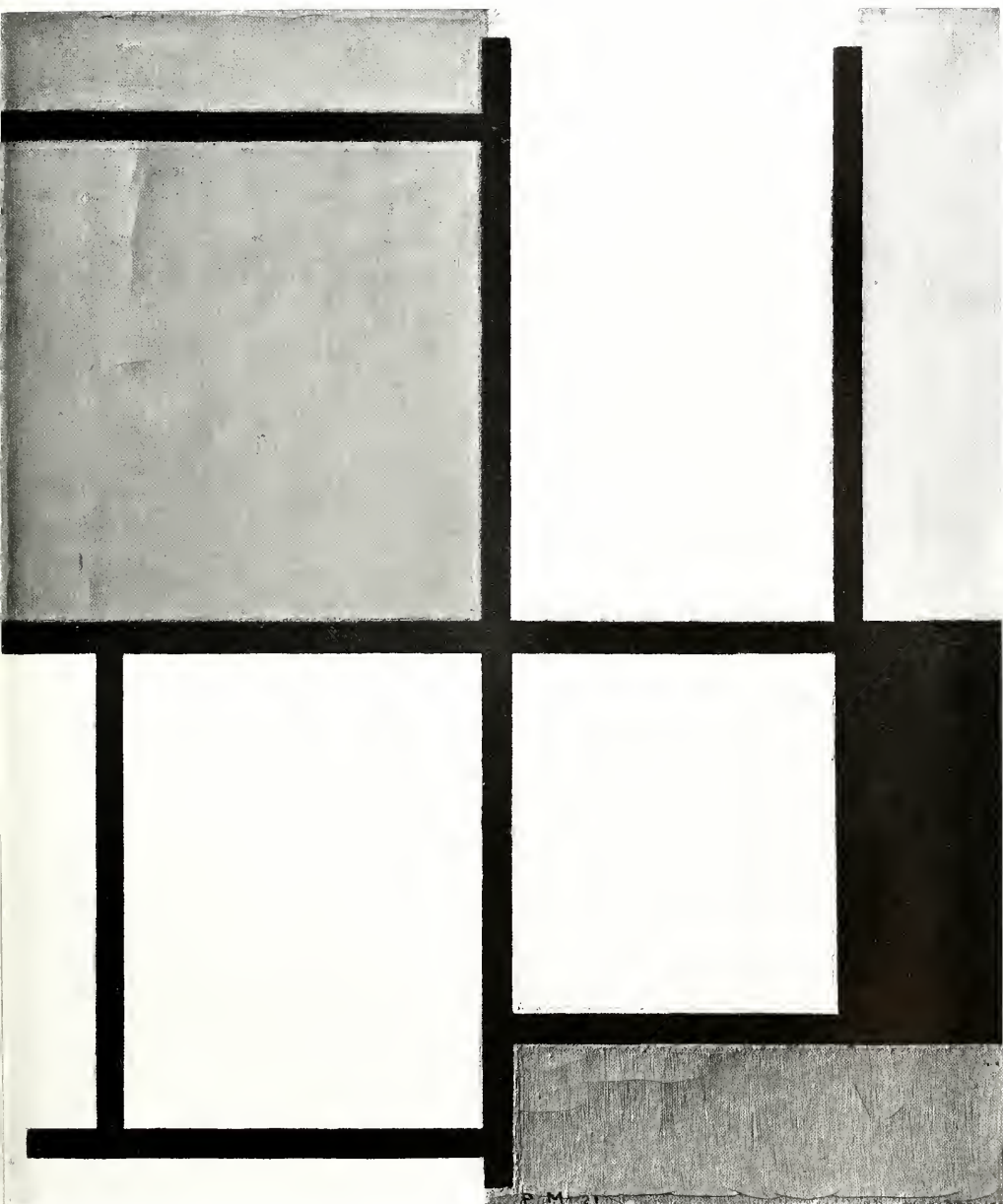
Composition – Komposition – Composition (1919)



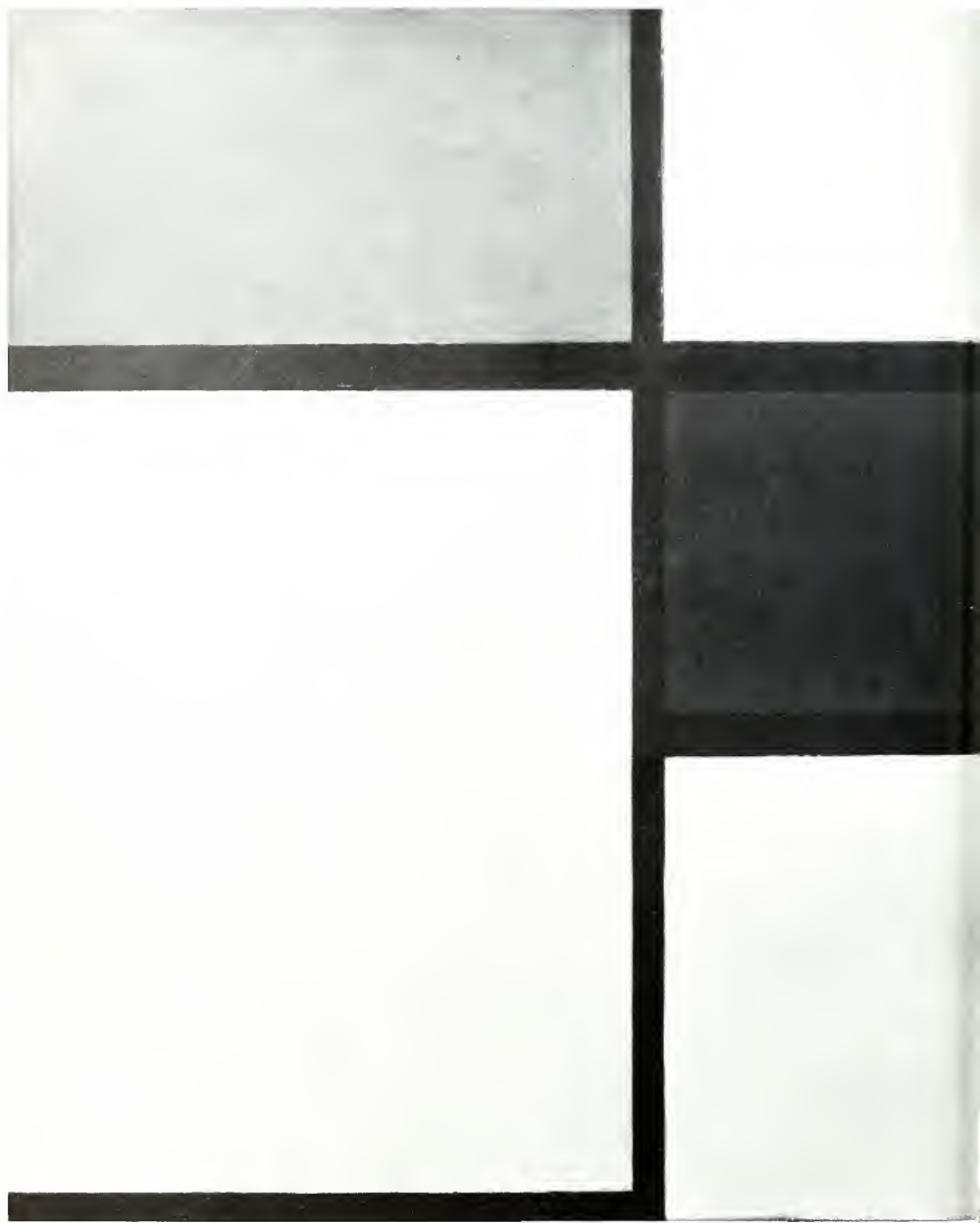
omposition – Komposition – Composition (1921)



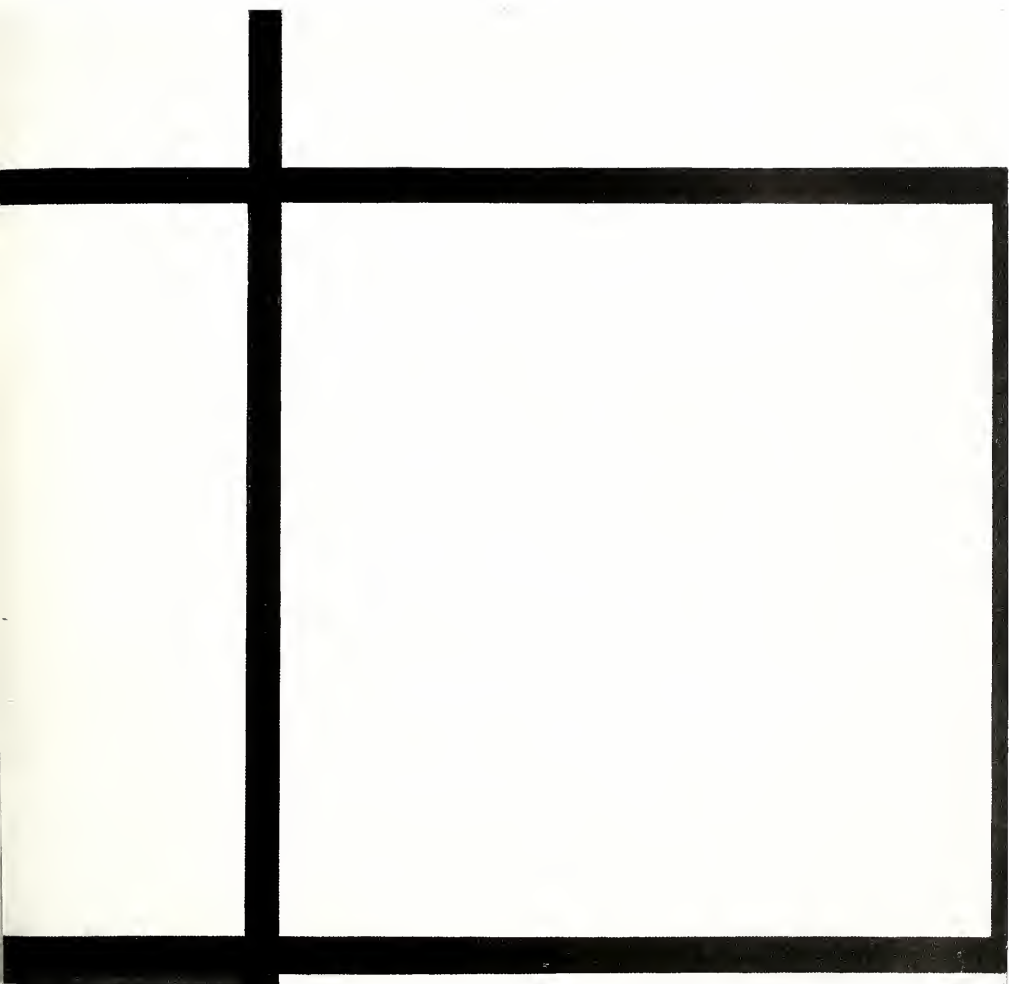
Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau – Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1921)



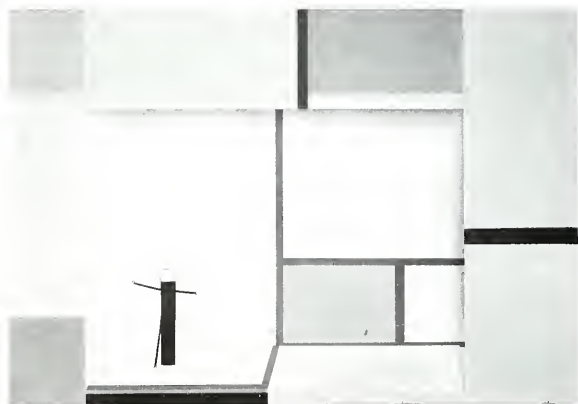
Composition - Komposition - Composition (1921)



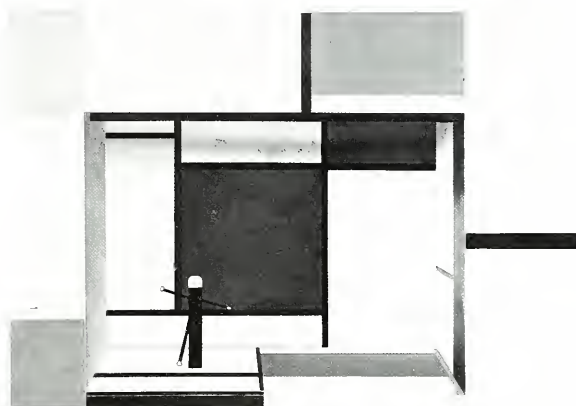
Composition – Komposition – Composition (1925)



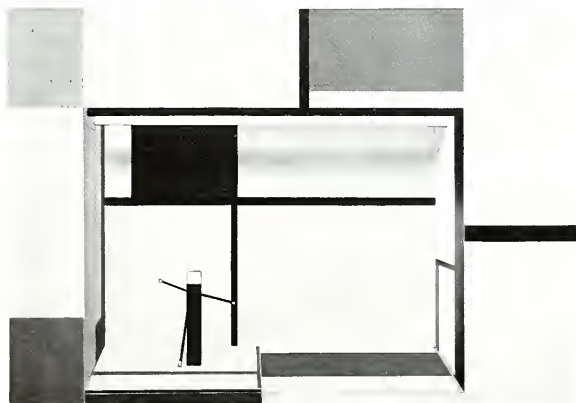
Composition in a Square – Komposition im Quadrat – Composition carrée (1926)



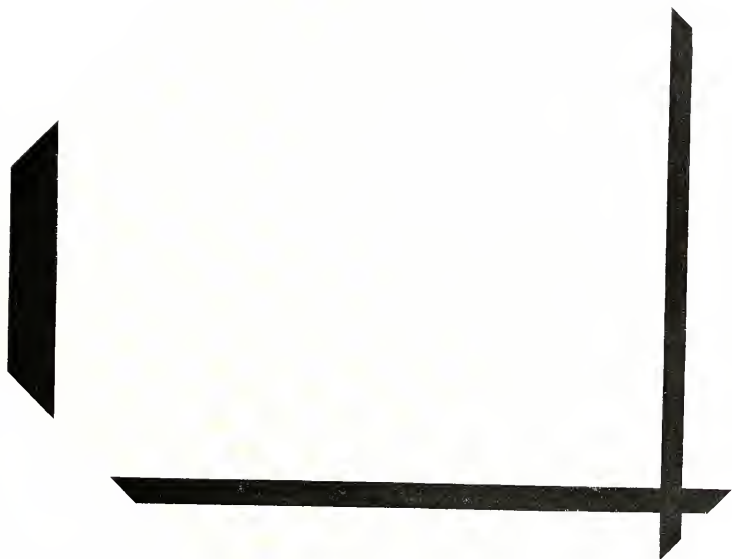
Stage Set I for "L'Ephémère est éternel" – Bühnenbild I für «L'Ephémère est éternel»
 Décor I pour «L'Ephémère est éternel» (1926)



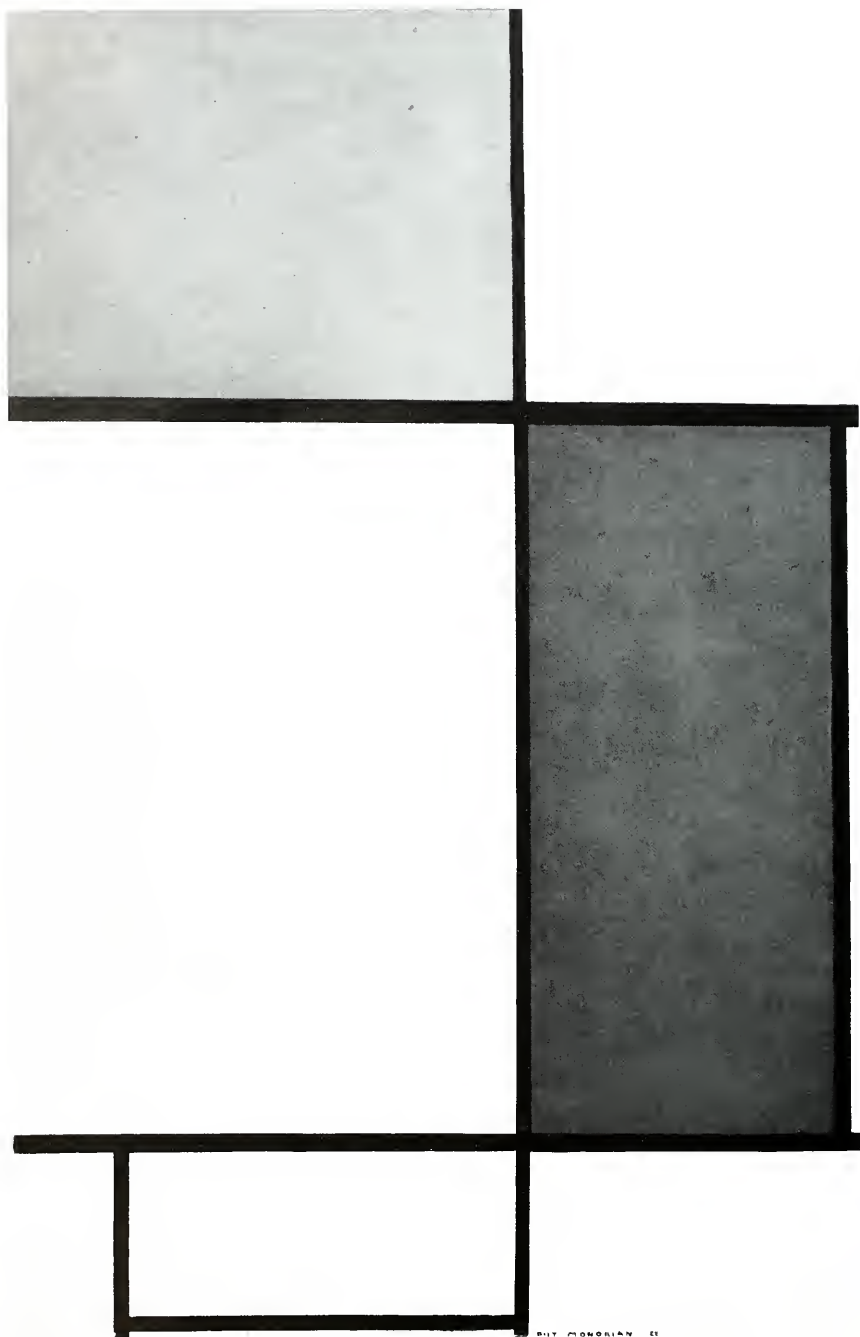
Stage Set II for "L'Ephémère est éternel" – Bühnenbild II für «L'Ephémère est éternel»
 Décor II pour «L'Ephémère est éternel» (1926)



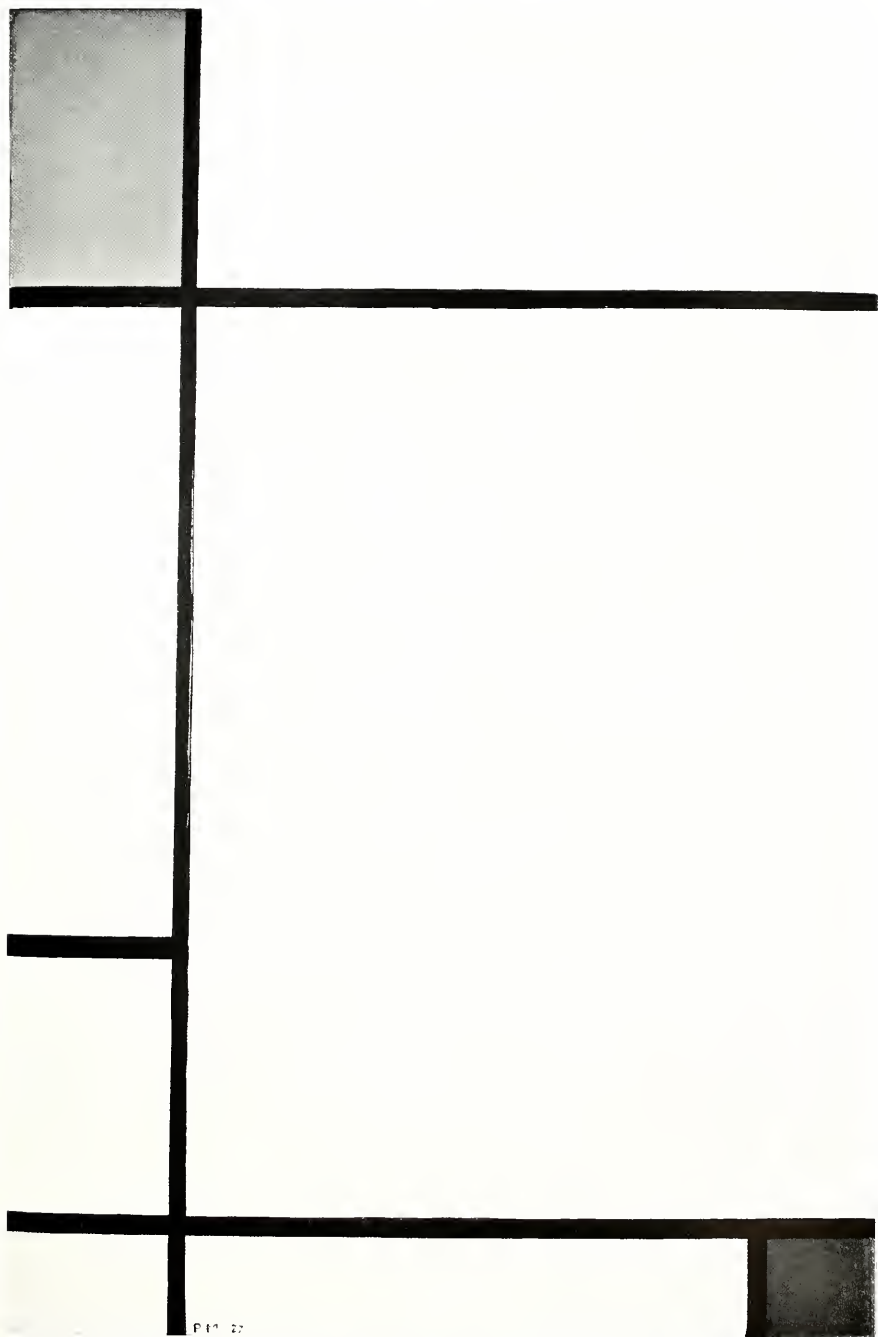
Stage Set III for "L'Ephémère est éternel" – Bühnenbild III für «L'Ephémère est éternel»
 Décor III pour «L'Ephémère est éternel» (1926)



Fox Trot A (1927)

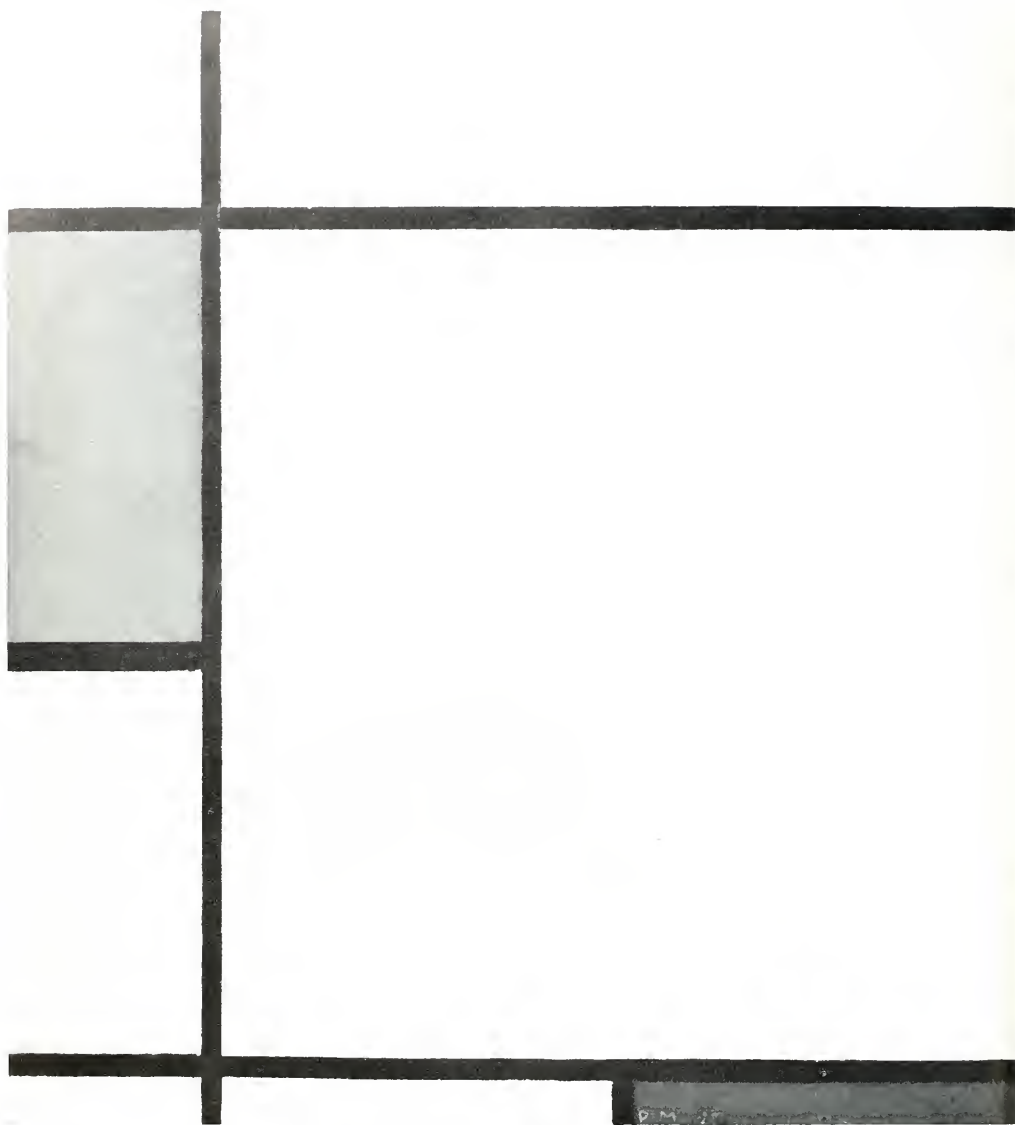


Large Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow – Große Komposition mit Rot, Blau und Gelb
Grande Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1928)

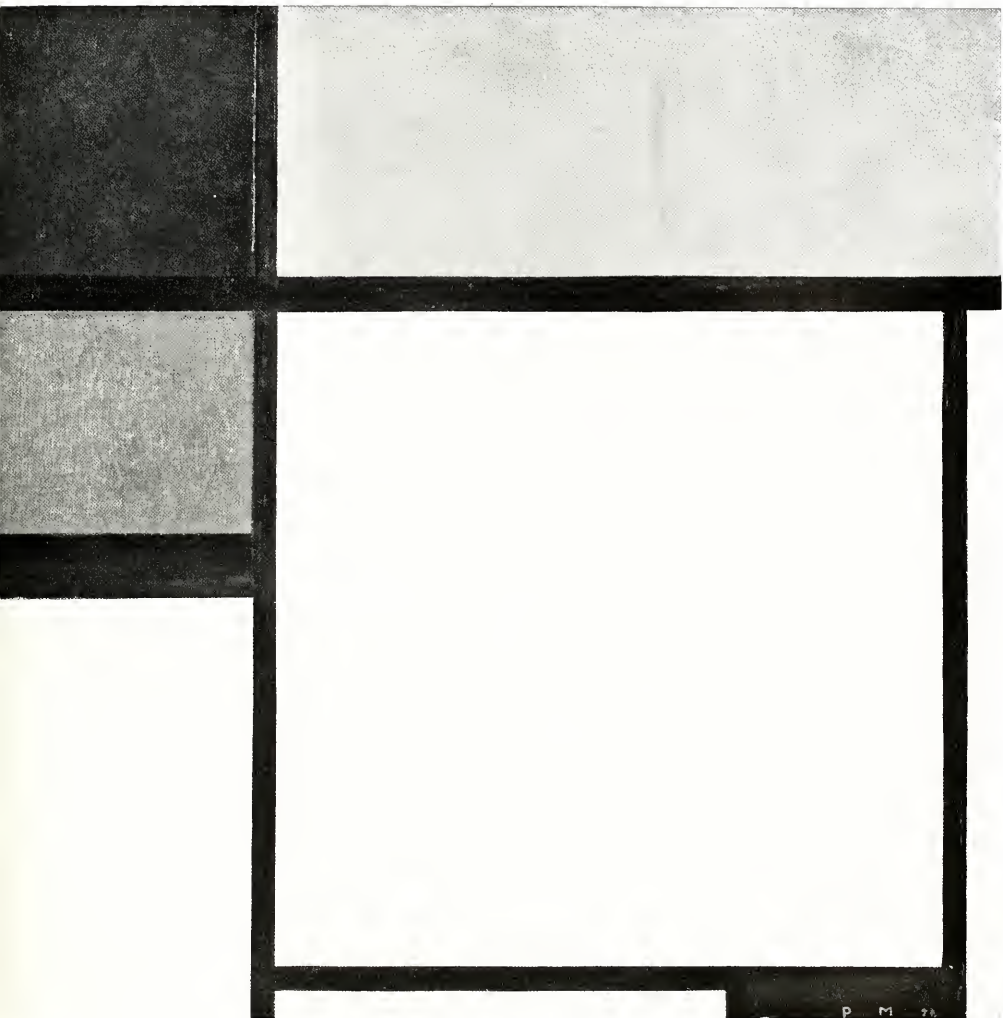


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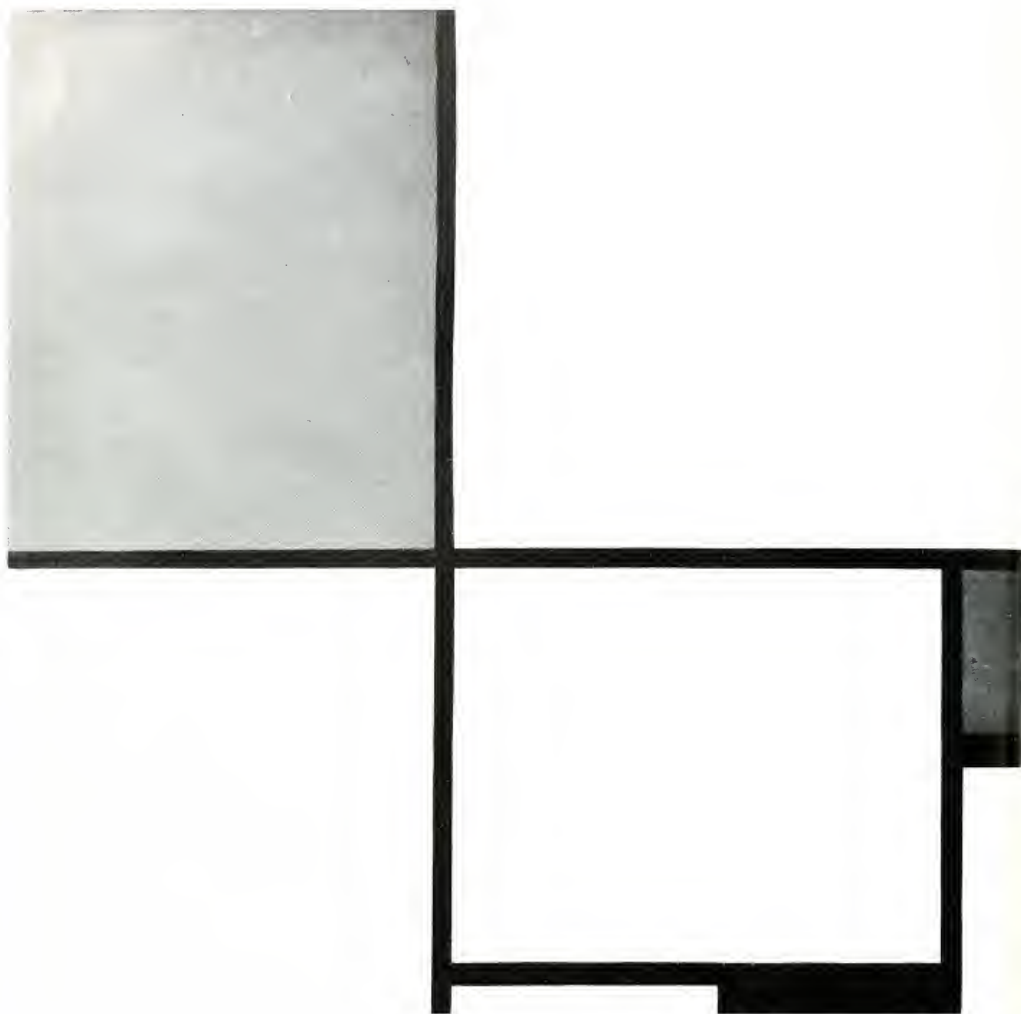
Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1927)



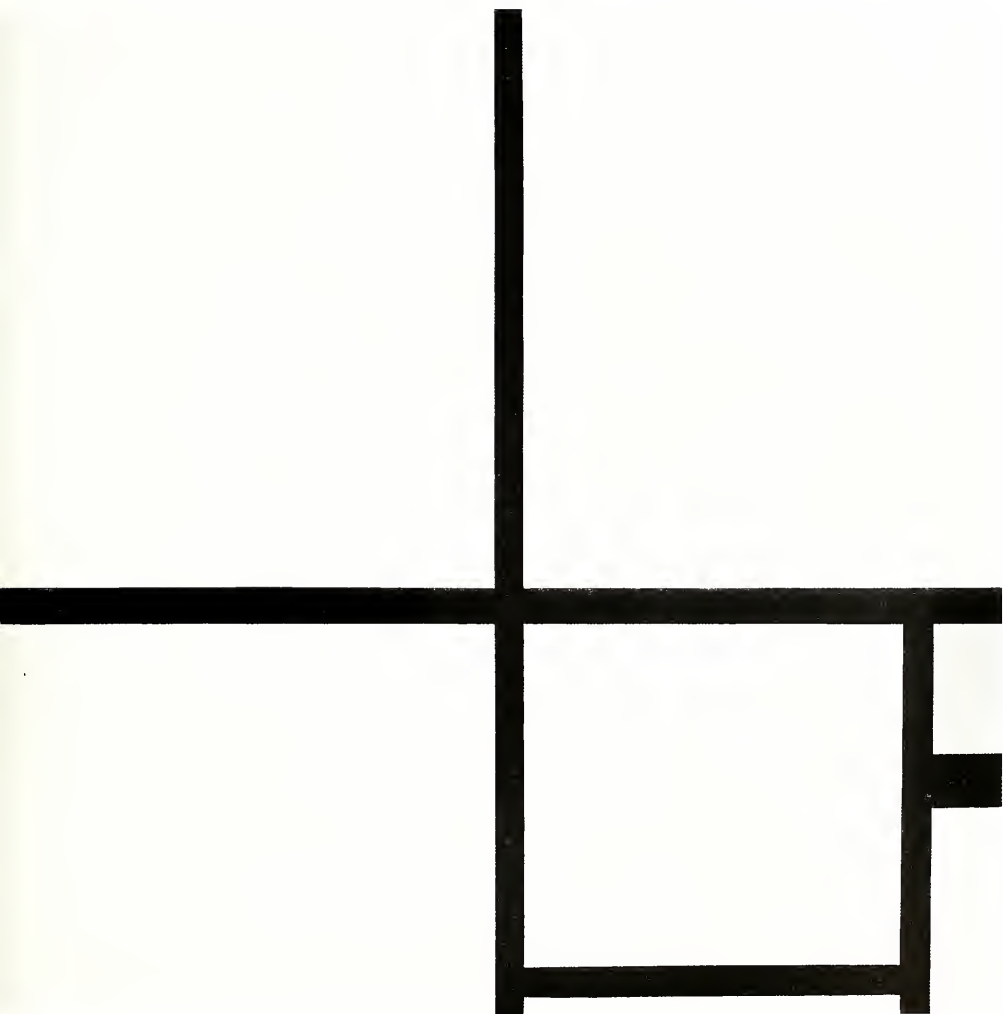
Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau – Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1927)



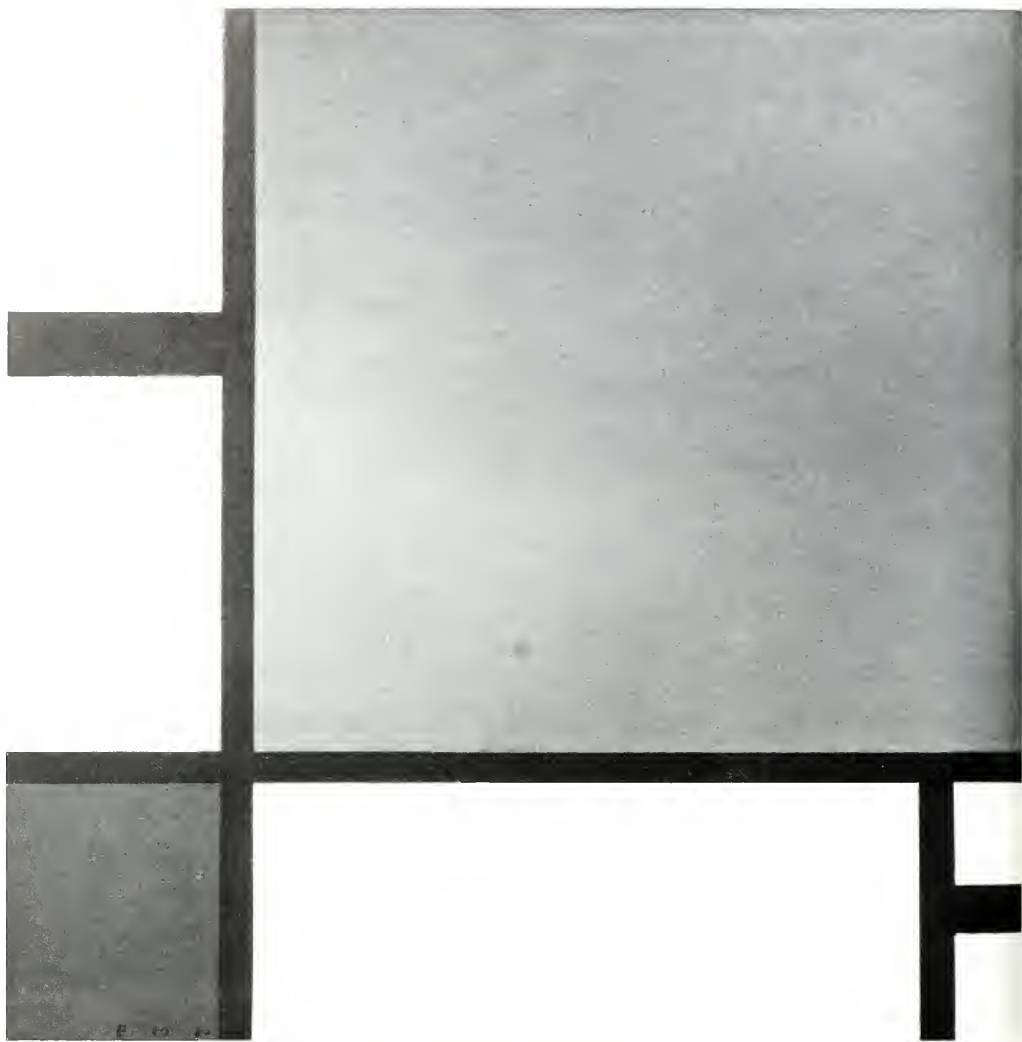
Box Trot B (1929)



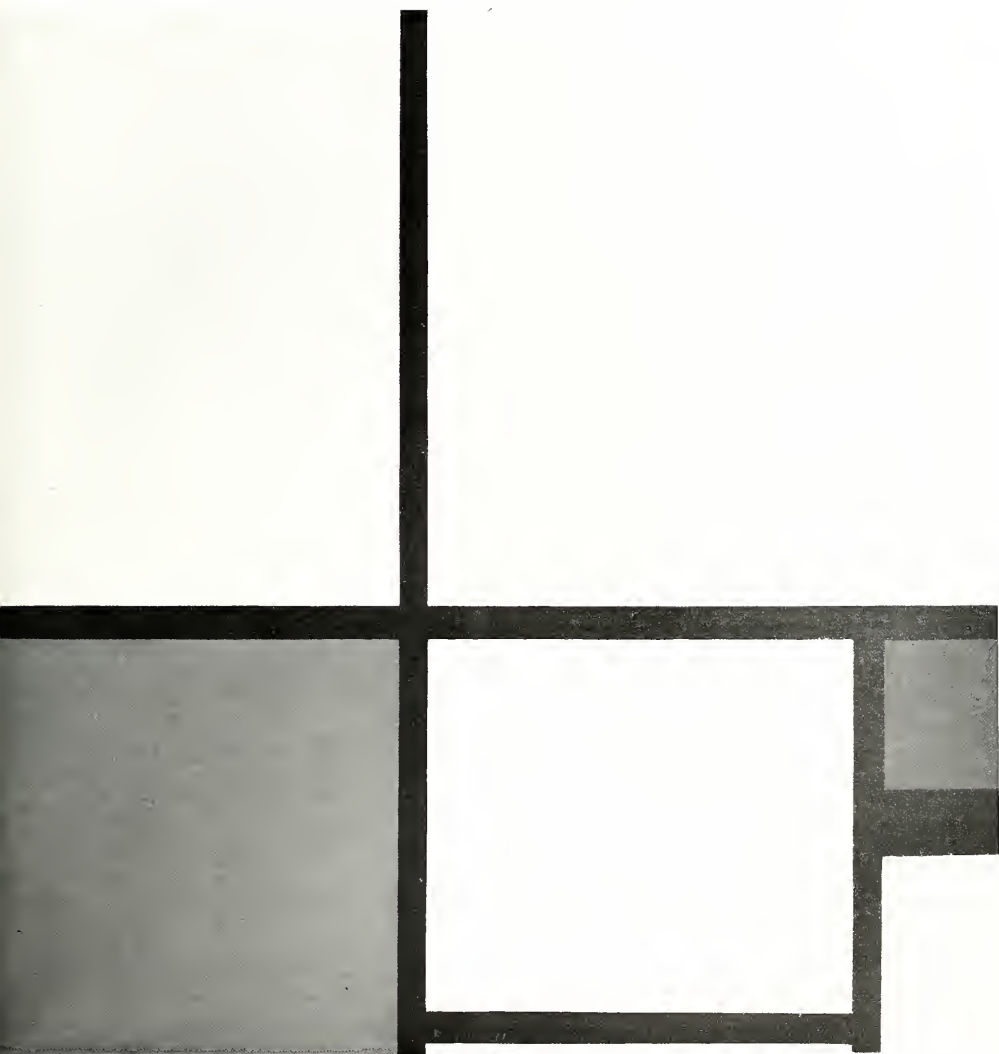
Composition III – Komposition III – Composition III (1929)



Composition with Yellow – Komposition mit gelbem Fleck – Composition avec jaune (1930)



Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1930)



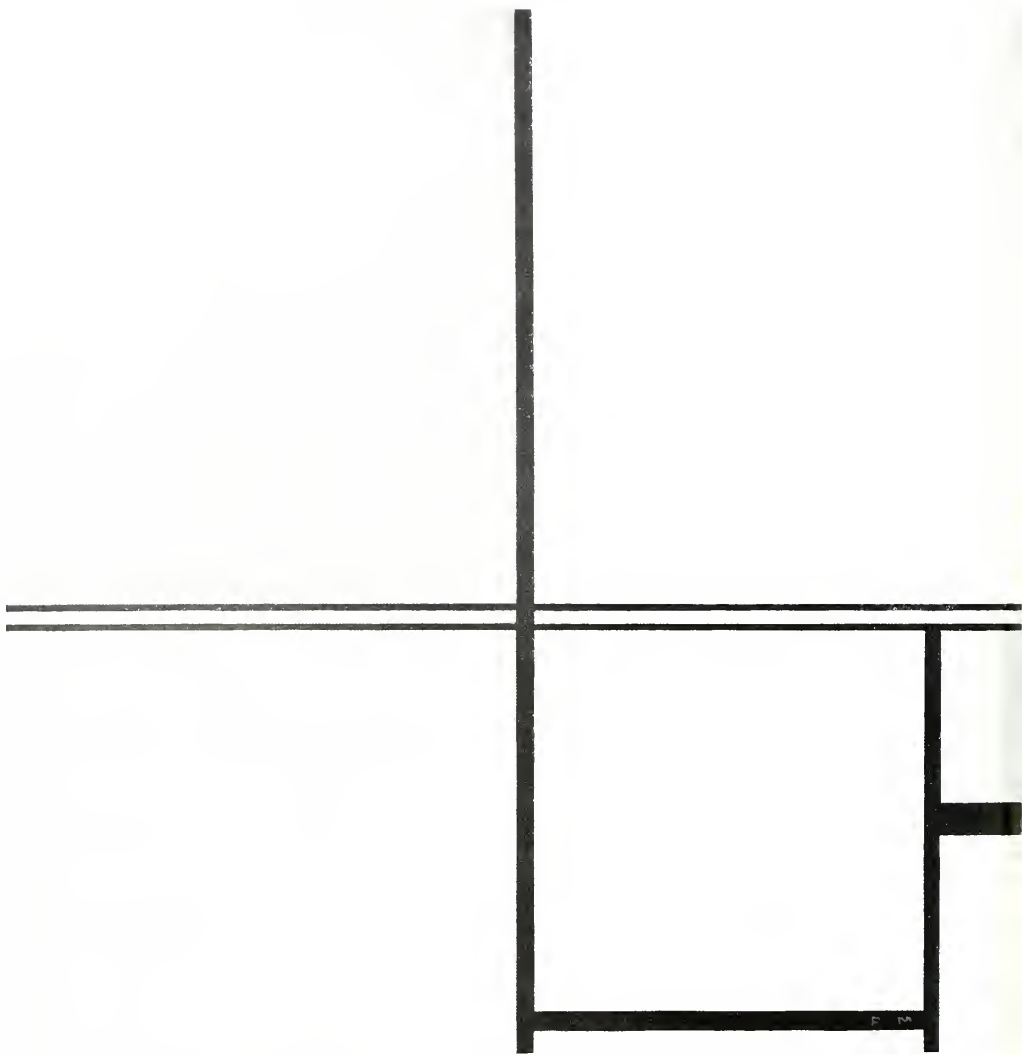
Composition - Komposition - Composition (1931)



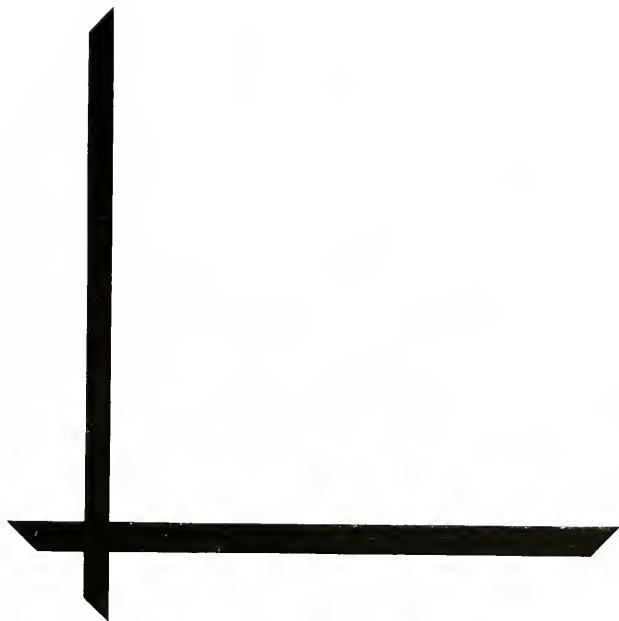
Composition D with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition D mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition D avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1932)



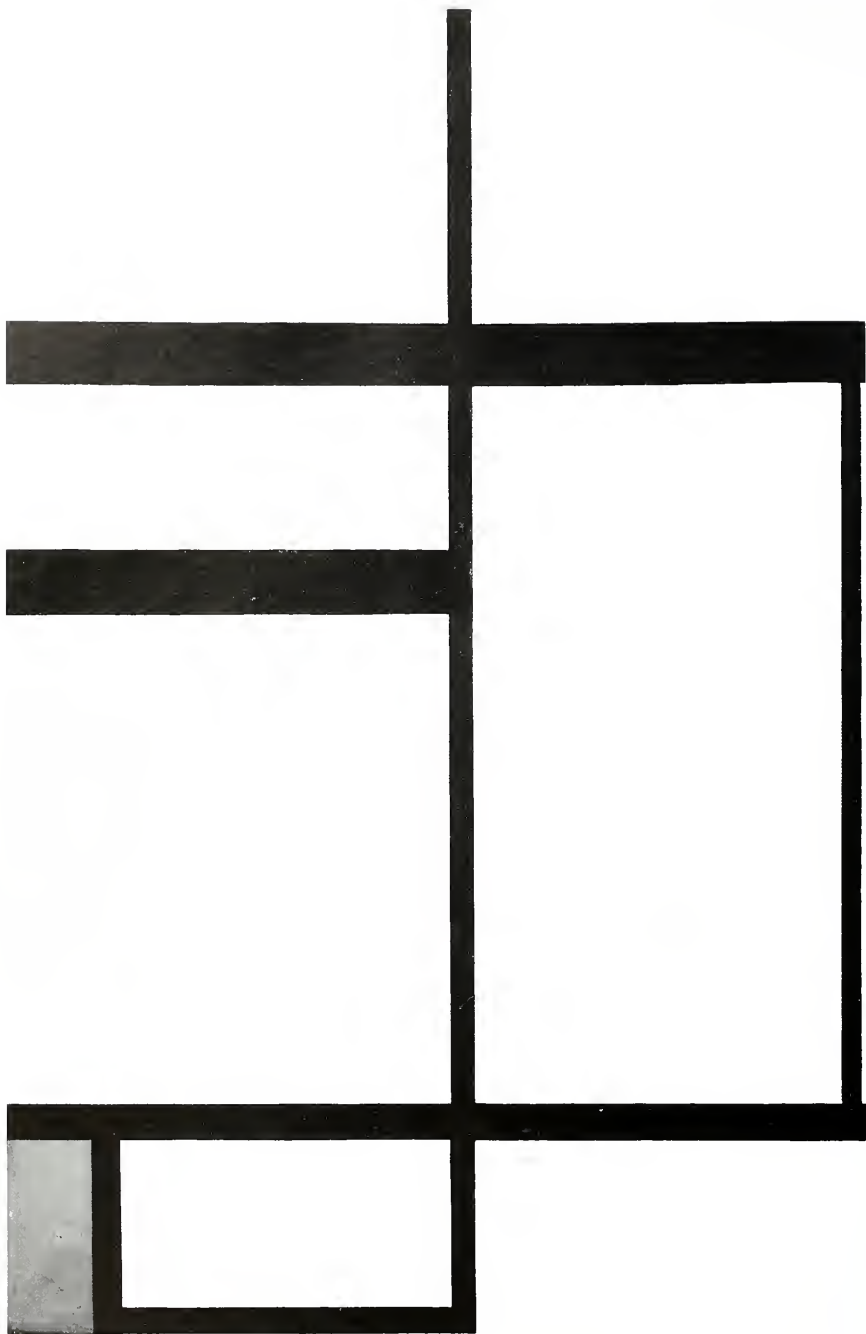
osition A – Komposition A – Composition A (1932)



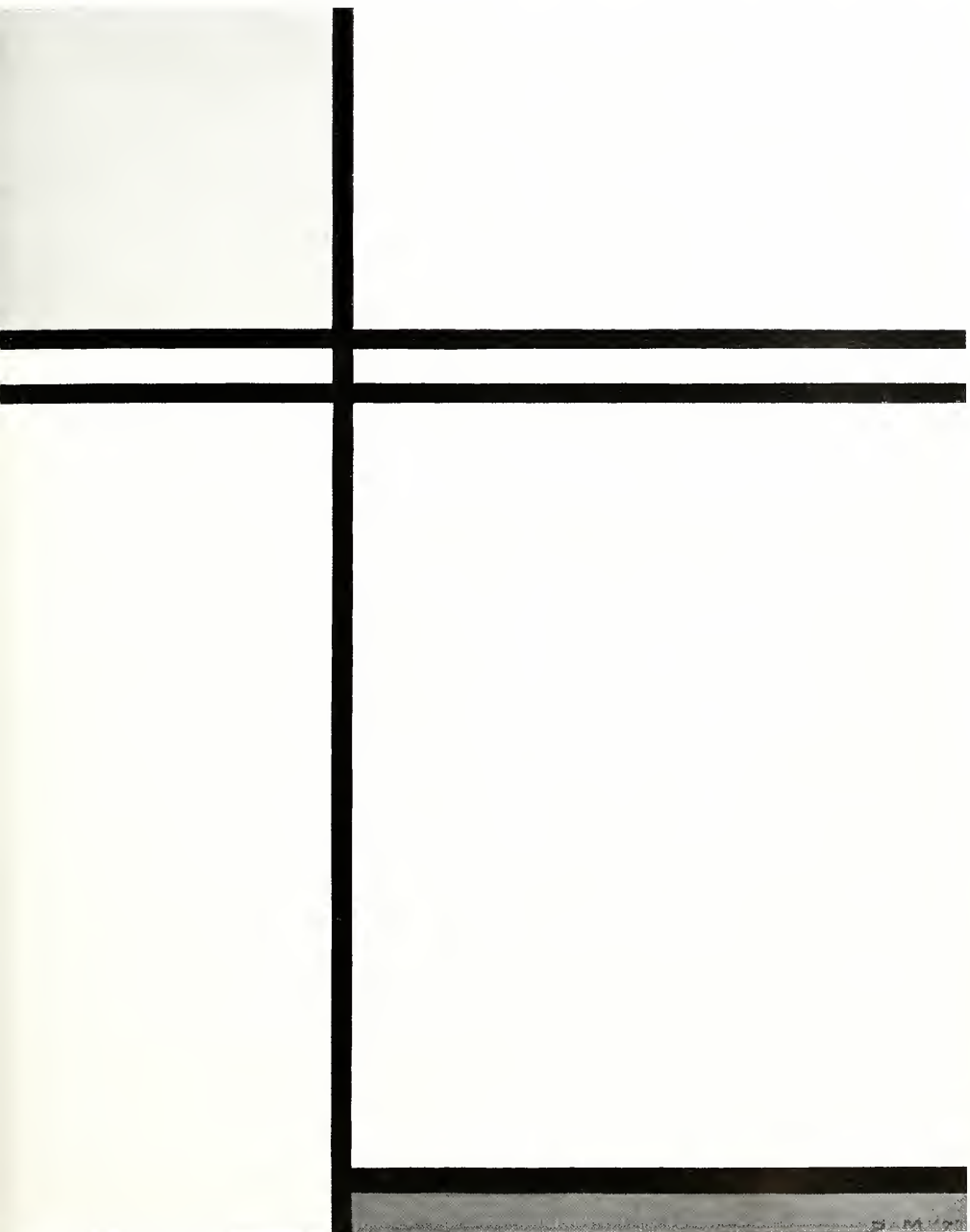
Composition B with Gray and Yellow – Komposition B mit Grau und Gelb – Composition B avec gris et jaune (1932)



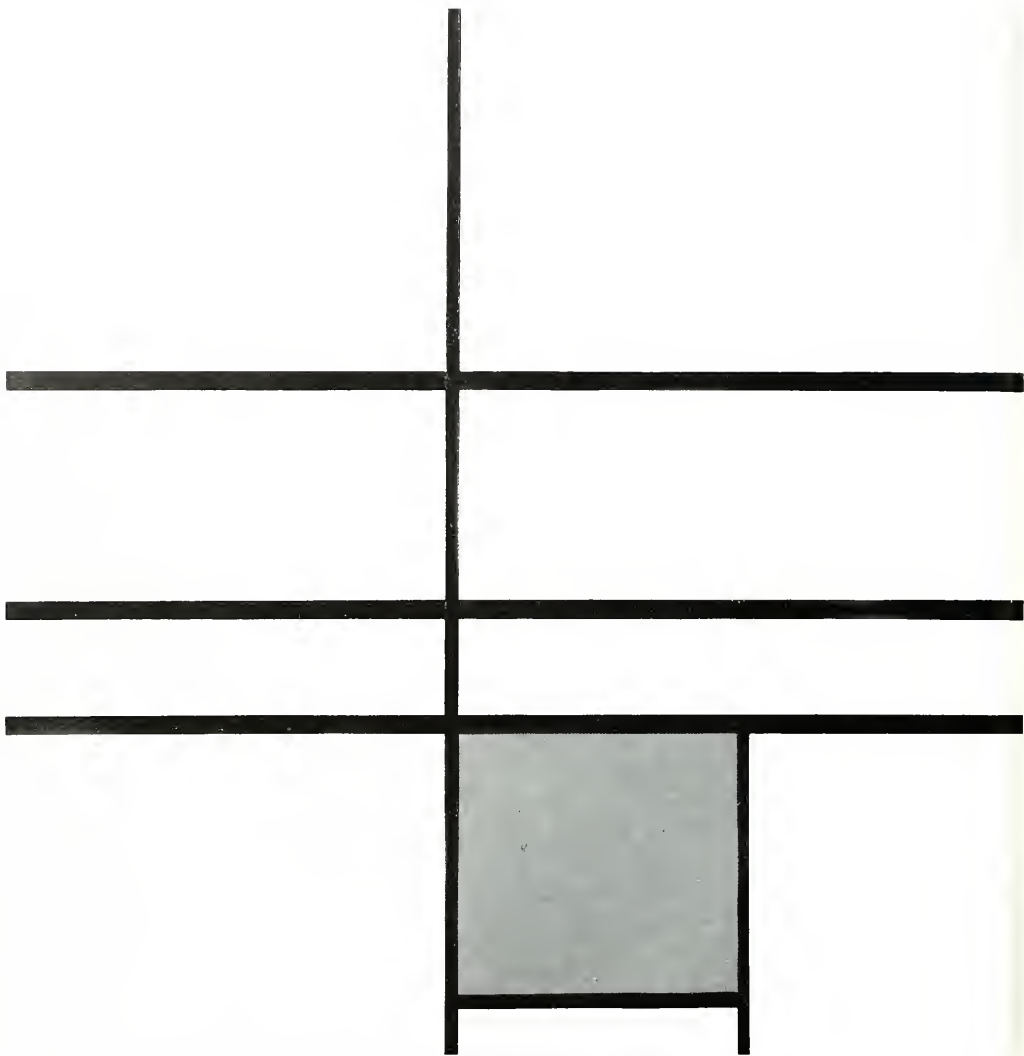
Composition with two lines – Komposition mit zwei Linien – Composition avec deux lignes (1931)



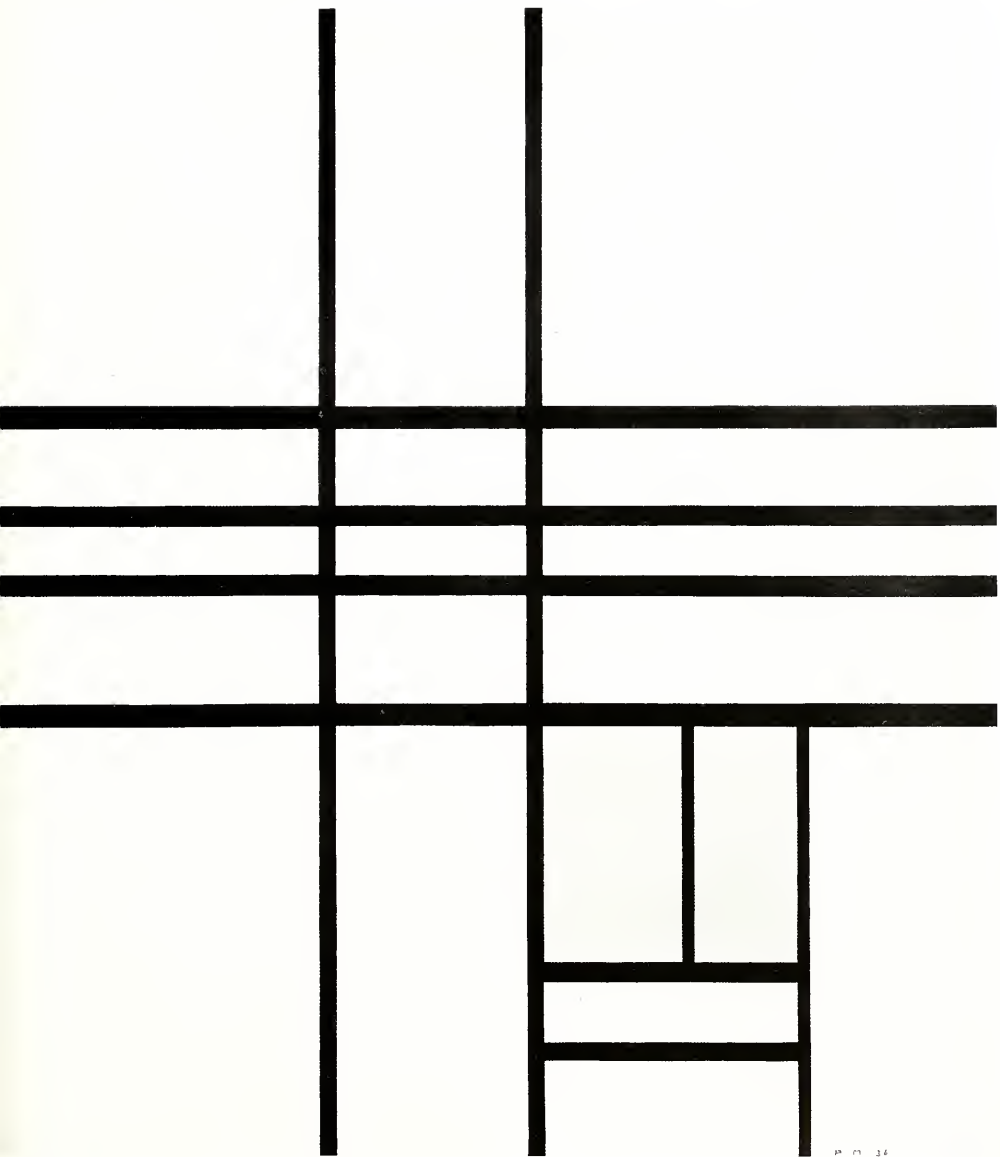
Composition with Red – Komposition mit Rot – Composition avec rouge (1931)



Composition with Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Gelb und Blau – Composition avec jaune et bleu (1933)

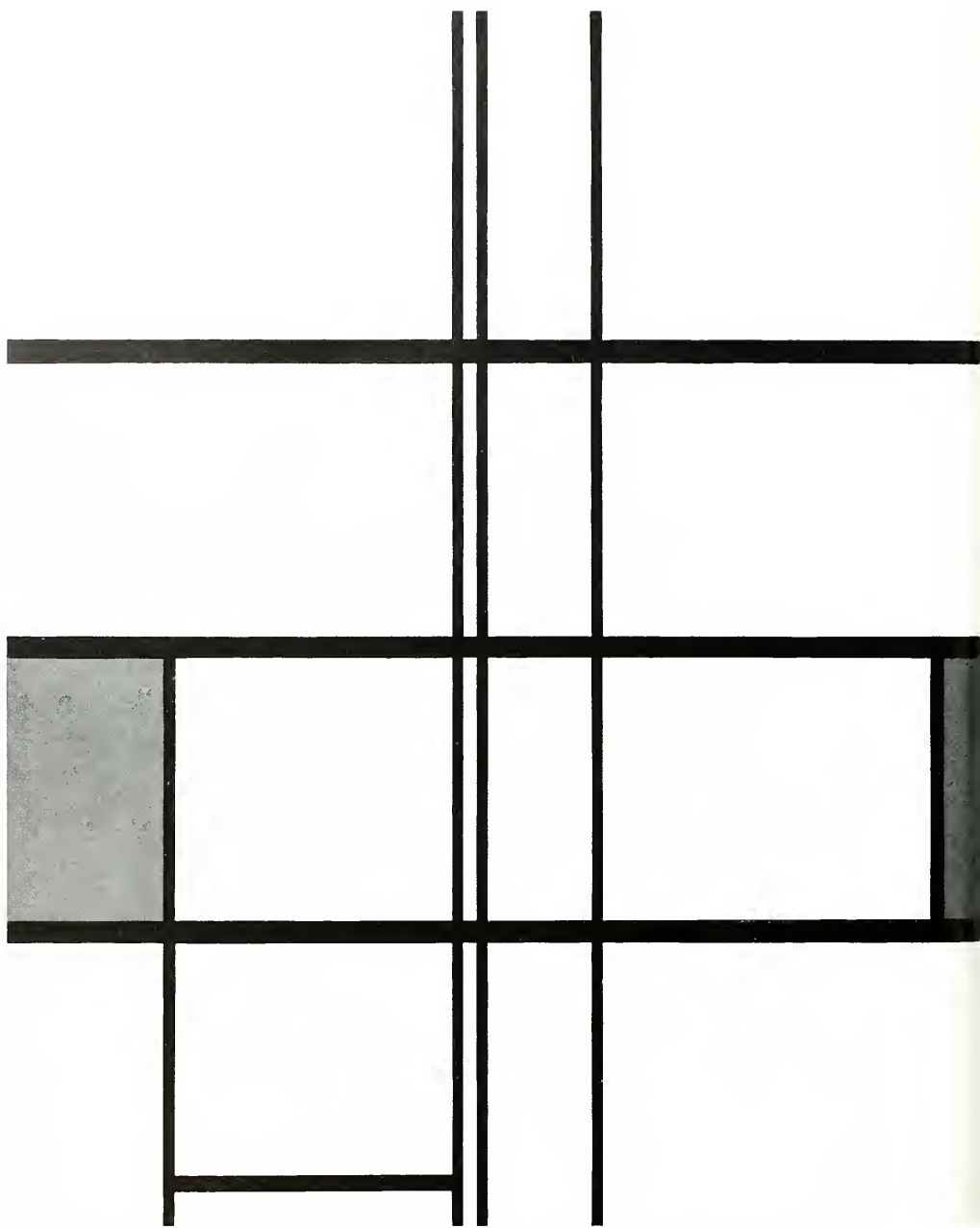


Composition with Blue – Komposition mit Blau – Composition avec bleu (1935)

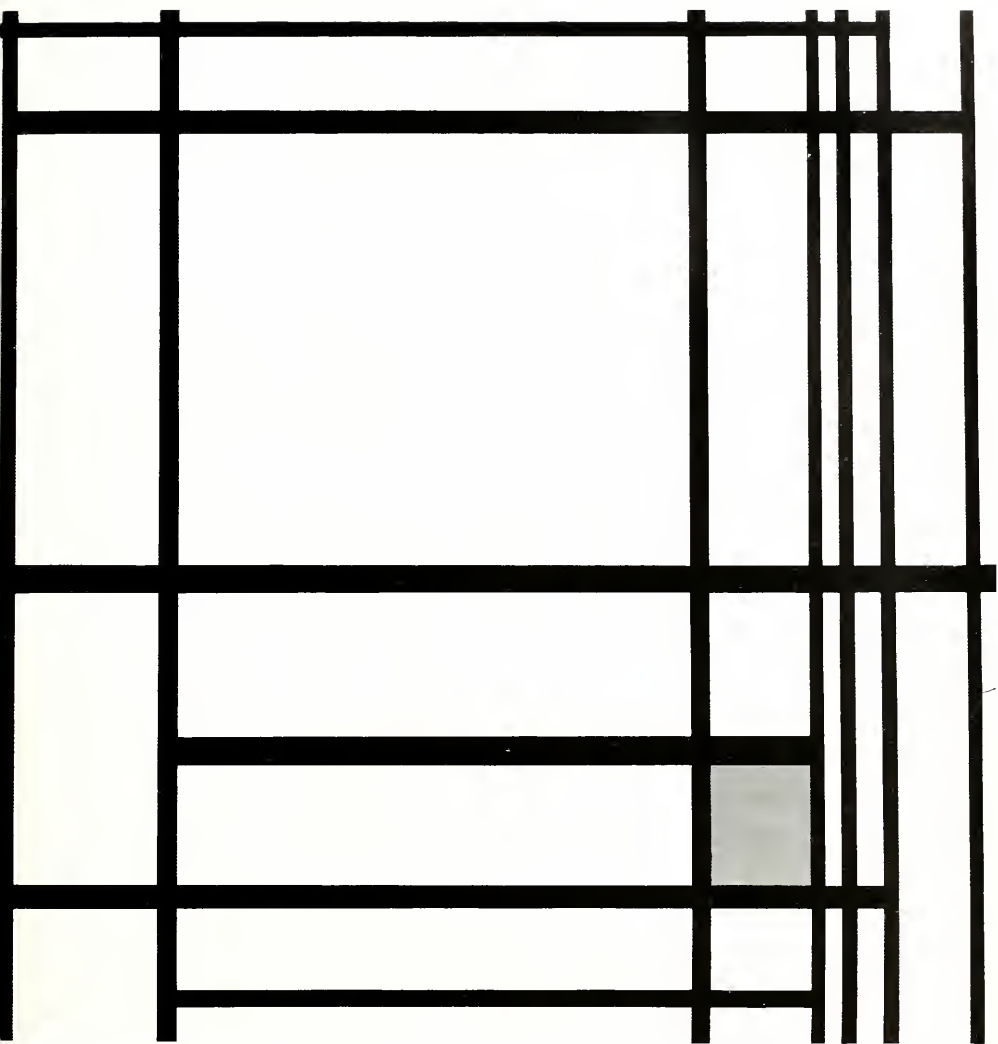


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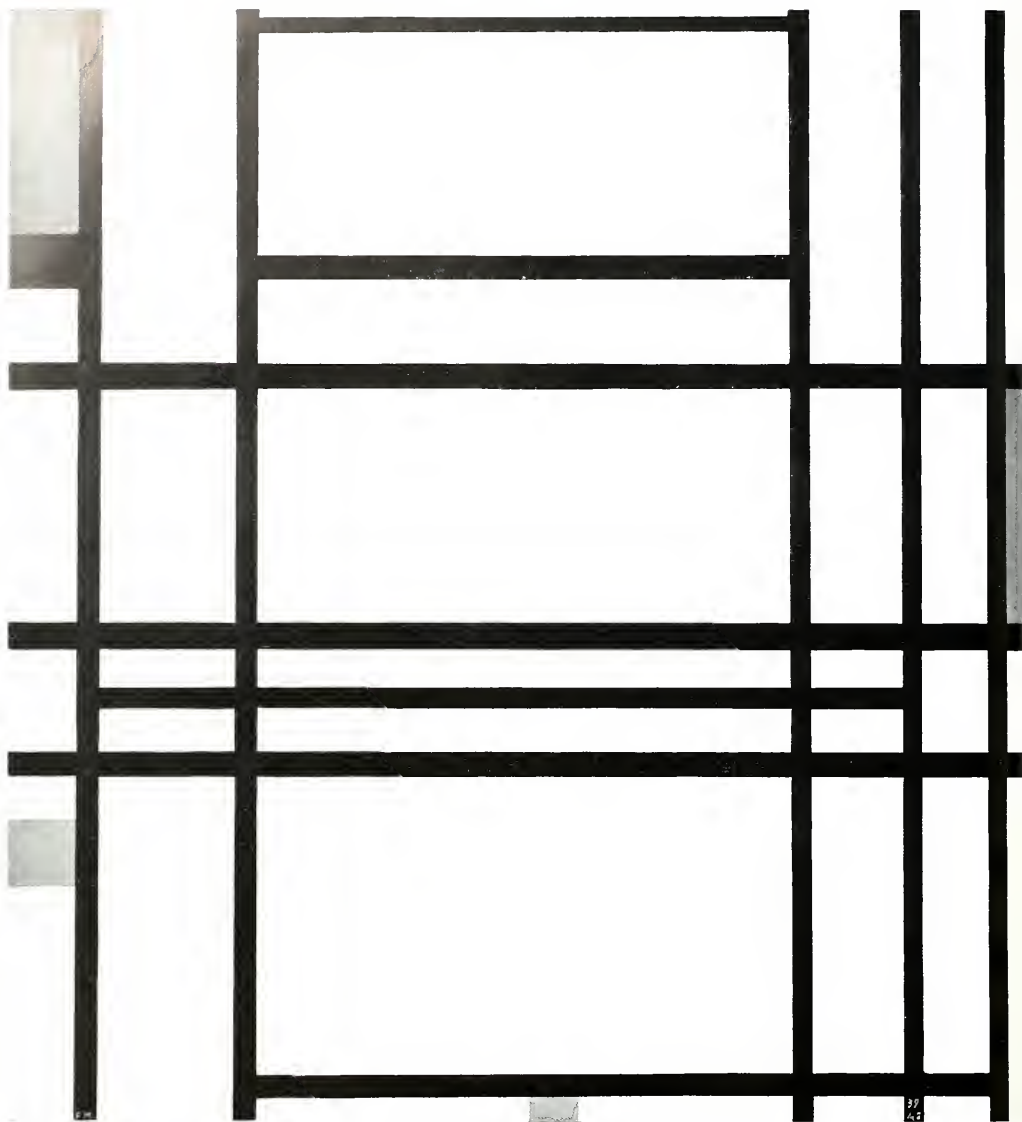
Composition - Komposition - Composition (1936)



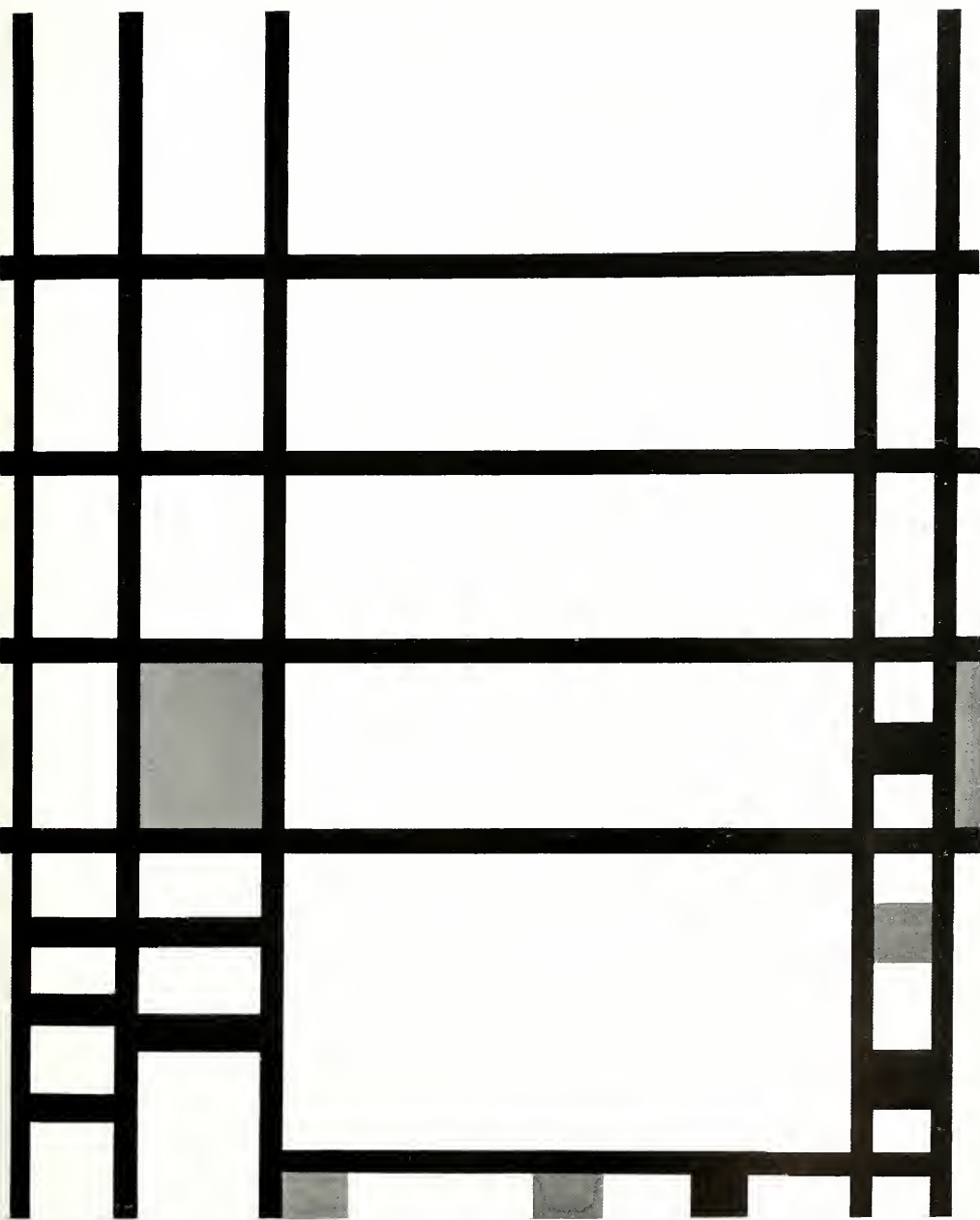
Composition with Red and Blue – Komposition mit Rot und Blau – Composition avec rouge et bleu (1936)



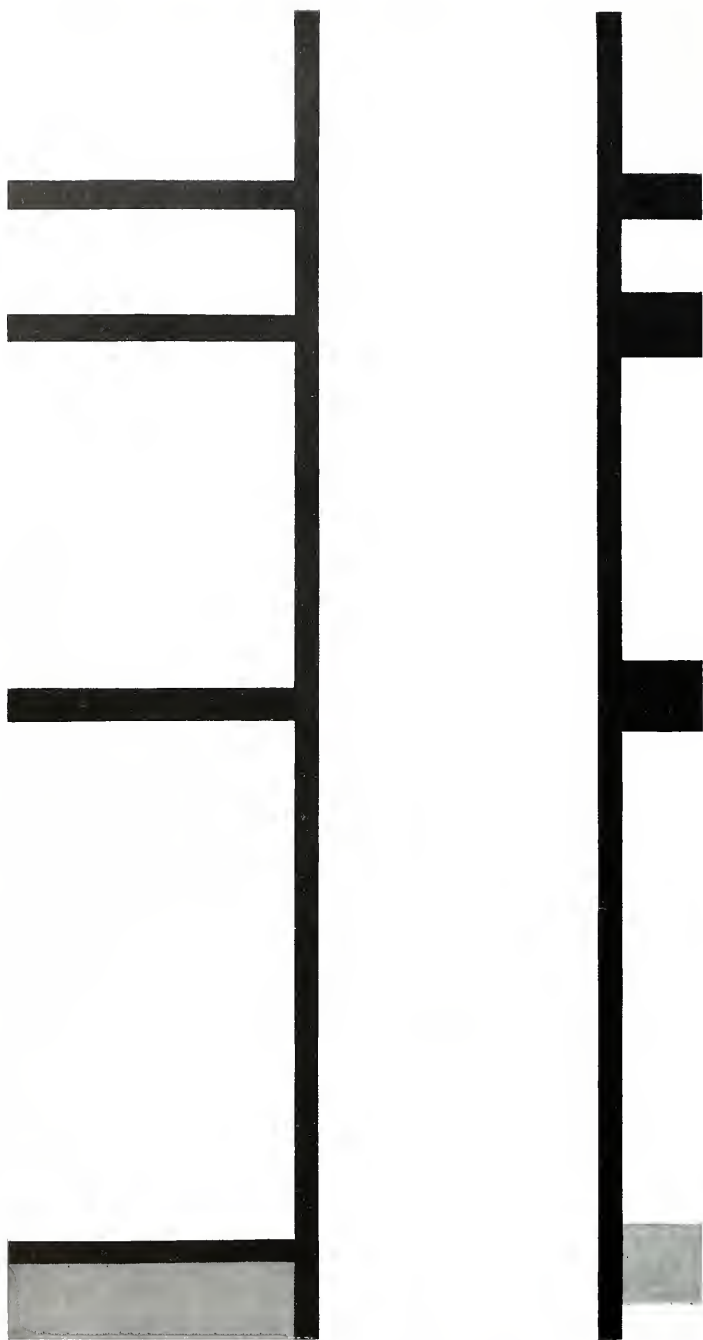
Composition with Blue — Komposition mit Blau — Composition avec bleu (1937)



Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1939–42)



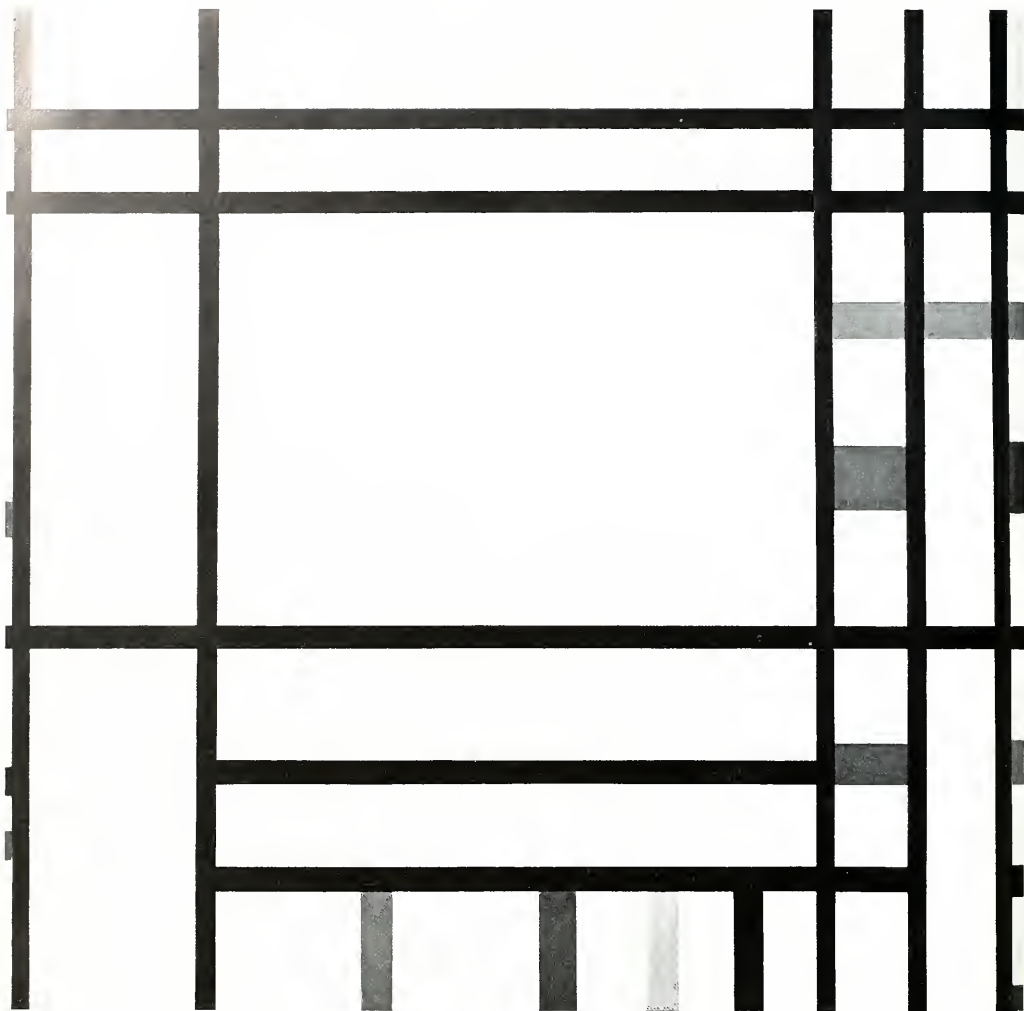
Trafalgar Square (1939-43)



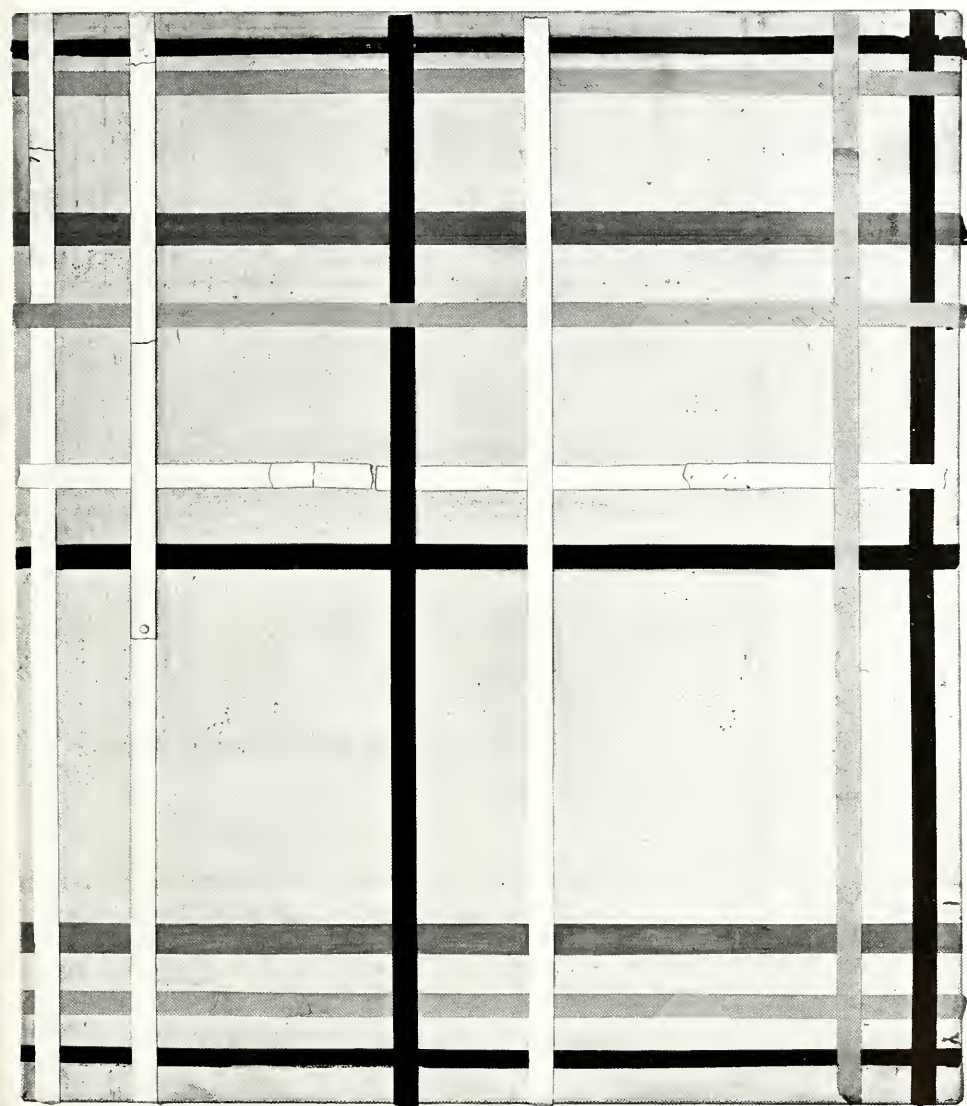
Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (1935–42)



Composition in a Square with Red – Komposition im Quadrat mit roter Ecke
Composition dans le carreau avec coin rouge (1943)



Place de la Concorde (1938-43)



New York City, No. 3 (unfinished – unvollendet – inachevée) (c. 1942)





Piet Mondrian

Natural Reality

and Abstract Reality

An essay in dialogue form

1919 | 1920

Characters

X, a naturalistic painter

Y, an art-lover

Z, an abstract-realist painter

*The dialogue takes place in the course of a walk
which begins in the country and ends in the city
at the studio of the abstract-realist painter*

Scene I

Dusk. Flat countryside. Vast horizon. Far up: the moon.

Y How beautiful!

X What deep tones and colors!

Z What repose!

Y So nature moves you, even you?

Z If that weren't so, I wouldn't be a painter.

Y Since you no longer paint from nature, I thought it did not move you in any way.

Z On the contrary, nature stirs me deeply. I paint nature, but differently.

X I have called your compositions "symphonies": I can see music in them, but nature, no.

Z But couldn't one see music in naturalistic painting? It too, has its rhythm, though it is less apparent than in abstract-realist painting.

X That's quite true, but abstract-realist painting does not resort to natural forms, and in this respect seems to me like music, which also needs no help from natural forms.

Z I can't agree with you on that last point, for combinations of sounds create a certain form, at least in traditional music; not a visible form, of course, but an audible one. The audible can be just as naturalistic as the visible; traditional music has made it its business to teach us that! *Modern* compositions, which renounce naturalistic melody and expression, are indeed related to abstract-realist painting, but not in the way you think. You want to make a clear-cut distinction between naturalistic and abstract-realist painting, so that the latter would somehow transcend the domain of painting proper. But the separation you want to effect is unreal. Even though these two tendencies are seemingly dissimilar, there is no essential difference between them. We realize this instantly when we return to the origin of the work of art: *the emotion of the beautiful*. Didn't all three of us feel fundamentally the same emotion, just now? Remember how we exclaimed when we looked at the landscape. *Y* stressed the fact that it was beautiful; you noticed the tonality, while I was struck by the way the beauty of colors and tones suggested repose.

Y I'll grant that, but . . .

X We are not in such agreement when we paint.

Z Despite everything our disagreements are superficial. You emphasize tone and color, whereas I emphasize what these express—repose. But actually, our efforts go in the same direction. Repose becomes plastically visible through the harmony of relations, and that is why I stress the expression of relations. You, on the other hand, stress colors and

tones, but the result is that you, too, express relations. You express relations as much as I, and I express color as much as you.

Y Relations?

Z We express ourselves plastically through the opposition of lines and colors; this opposition creates relations.

X But isn't it evident that in the art of painting relations are expressed through the natural appearance?

Z Quite the contrary: as nature becomes more abstract, a relation is more clearly felt. The new painting has clearly shown this. And that is why it has come to the point of expressing nothing but relations.

X To express relations . . . for me, that happens by itself, it's nature's work. As for limiting myself to expressing relations, well, I'm not keen on that. Let us, for instance, consider the present landscape. I clearly see the relation of the sky, the earth, and the moon; and I see, too, that the position of the moon in the landscape is a matter of relations. But what I don't see is why I should paint everything abstractly, just because of these relations. It is precisely the natural which, for me, makes the relation come alive!

Z That depends on one's point of view. For me, the plastic relation is more alive precisely when it is not enveloped in the natural, but shows itself in the flat and rectilinear. In my opinion, this gives us a far more intense expression than natural form and color. But, to use more general terms, the natural appearance *veils* the expression of relations. When one wants to express definite relations plastically, one must show them with greater precision than they have in nature. In the landscape before us, the relations of position are not apparent to the superficial eye.

X What exactly do you mean by "relations of position"?

Z I mean that the relation lies not in the size of lines and planes, but in the *position* of lines and planes with respect to each other. The most perfect instance is the right angle, which expresses the relation between two extremes. In this landscape, the horizontal appears to us only in the line of the horizon. A single position is thus positively expressed. On the other hand, neither the contrary position, the vertical, nor any other, is exactly expressed in this landscape, that is, in a linear fashion. Nevertheless, an opposition is expressed by the sky, whose elevated position appears as a vast, flat surface – an indeterminate flat surface, it is true, but upon it the moon places an exact point. In this way, the plane of the sky is defined from this point to the horizon. The definition is a vertical line, even though such a line is not apparent in the scene before us. It is for us to trace it, in order to express positively the opposition to the horizontal. Thus we see that the relation of position is manifested in nature, too, though in an inexact manner. It is this balanced interrelation of different positions (the opposition of line and plane by means of the right angle) which expresses repose plastically.

Y Since the opposition expressed by the right angle is an unchanging one, it must, indeed, express repose.

Z Repose is so strongly suggested by this landscape because both the hori-

zontal and the vertical are manifested there. The relation of position appears in the natural harmony. Not, however, in pure equilibrium. The luminosity of the sky determines the vertical; the horizon, which is masked, determines the horizontal. The oblique position is excluded. The latter would be felt at once if additional accents were placed here or there. For instance, if a tree rose above the horizon, our eye would at once trace involuntarily a line going from that tree to the moon. This oblique position would oppose, but not balance, the horizontal and vertical positions of the landscape, and thus the great repose would be broken.

X The relation of proportion is also important, it is a direct corollary to the relation of position.

Z That is certainly so. The relation of position could scarcely express equilibrium without an equivalent relation of proportion. If this landscape is so peaceful, this is also due to the balancing relation of proportion.

X And the relation of color?

Z The natural value of colors as colors, and as light and shade, is certainly one of the conditions of equilibrium. But all the same, the relation of color and the relation of proportion are both based on the relation of position.

Y Color as such is already a great delight to me. A yellow all by itself, a simple blue, unfolds before me a whole world of beauty.

Z To be sure, color as such animates everything, and it is possible to be carried by the pure vision of color to the loftiest heights, indeed, to contemplation of the universal. But one must add that color as such speaks to us so insistently of external things that we run the risk of remaining in the contemplation of what is external and vague, instead of seeing the abstract.

X But the value of a color comes from the opposition of another color, from the relation of colors, as you yourself rightly remarked.

Z This relation gives color its clear definition, and does away with the sensation of vagueness to which I referred before. But this does not contradict what I said. For instance: a red moon expresses something quite different from the silver-yellow moon we are now looking at.

Y To me, a red moon seems terribly tragic.

Z But that is not due to the moon's color alone, but to its position as well; the moon, when red, is generally close to the horizon, so that the horizontal line strongly dominates the vertical distance between moon and horizon. Thus we see once more that the relation of proportion sustains the expression of color. But this should not make us forget that the color of the sky around the lunar red also has its expressive value: blue is the opposite of red, and removes a good part of its "tragic" quality, and so on. The more we see the relation of colors, the less do we see color itself; we liberate ourselves evermore from the particular, and hence from the representation of the tragic.

Y In listening to what you both said about relations, something I was vaguely aware of became clear to me: that we ought to apprehend the visible as a whole from which

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nothing can be omitted, a whole in which all things are parts and therefore necessary. And now I see more and more clearly that the expression of the visible depends on the position of the parts of the visible.

Z Yes, all things are parts of a whole. Each part receives its visual value from the whole, and the whole receives its visual value from the parts. Everything is constituted by relation and reciprocity. Color exists only through another color, dimension is defined by another dimension; there is no position except by opposition to another position. This is why I say that relation is the principal thing.

Y Just the same . . . when, for instance, I see the moon, and consider it as a thing in itself, I find it beautiful because of its own color, beautiful through its form!

Z Each thing is beautiful, of course, when considered as a thing in itself, but such beauty is limited. When considering an object as a thing in itself, we separate it from the whole, we miss what opposes it, and we no longer see a relation but only color and form. We observe a color, a form, we believe we know them, but the limitation of the closed form and the depth of the isolated color measure, at the same time, the limits of our knowledge. When we see things as particular and separate objects we wander off into the uncertain, and we are carried away in dreams and conjectures. *One thing can only be known through something else*, as the wise have always taught.

Y But supposing that only one thing were visible, could we know this thing through something else not present?

Z The number "two" which is one plus one, is a duality and yet a whole; and conversely unity implies duality. Unity appears as such only to us! In fact, it is a composite. Each unity is already a new duality, a whole. Each thing is a miniature replica of the whole – a composition. The microcosm is in every respect like the macrocosm, according to scientists and sages.

So all we have to do is to consider each thing in itself as a duality – a multiplicity, a complex and, vice versa, each element of a complex as a part of a whole. Then we will see only relations, and we will know things by other things.

X Yes, one is one only in appearance, it is part of a whole, and, at the same time, a whole made up of parts. We see that clearly in all painting.

Y Yes, but where can we find a solid foundation, a support for all these relations?

Z In this variety of relations, a single relation is unchanging: this is the right angle, and plastically, we have our firm support in it.

Y Is that why you brought up the right angle just before, when we talked about the restfulness of this landscape?

Z The repose of this landscape is in fact founded plastically on the position of the right angle. Particularly now that night has come, and the details are effaced; all has become flat. At this moment, the landscape shows us the relation of the right angle at its most emphatic. We see nothing now but the line of the horizon and the moon. It is by means of the moon that we see the vertical in an abstract way: thus the primordial relation appears before

us. But it appears as a unity: such is nature's way of creating, which cannot be that of art. We are men and still have to represent repose by movement, unity by multiplicity. In the art of painting, it is a rhythm of lines and colors that has to make us feel the real. The original relation, that is, the right angle, is, of course, a living reality in itself, but it becomes a plastic reality only through the relativity, that is, the multiplicity, of relations.

Scene II

Capricious forms; on the clear sky with moon, the trees stand out in black relief.

Y How contorted!

X What a majestic sight!

Z In fact, twisted and grandiose, both. In these broad contours, the capricious side of nature appears clearly.

Y I can see all sorts of heads, living forms.

Z Which shows how relative is the appearance of any form: in broad daylight everything seemed quite different.

Y Probably because now we do not see the details. But I wonder what makes it all so impressive now?

X First of all, the synthesis of details. As you said, here is a model for us who paint: in painting, the greatest difficulty is precisely to subordinate the details to the ensemble.

Y But I don't see any details.

X You only seem not to see them. Movement is always present everywhere in this landscape, as well as form and color; however, all this is dominated by the sweeping contours.

Z Yes, the synthetic line of the contour is the decisive element of this landscape. And something more: the light changes the relation of things optically, especially when it is quite intense, as at this moment. It follows that when we represent relations with photographic fidelity, without taking into account the change in forms and colors due to the light, we do not evoke in the beholder the emotion he felt before natural reality.

X I agree with you on this point: in art we should distort nature.

Z The more rigorously we apply this principle, the more far-reaching are our distortions. But to go back to our trees: one reason why they strike us as so big is that they seem flat to us.

Y But I thought that one of the merits of painting is to be able to render the volume of things.

Z Relatively: naturalistic painting does try to give the illusion of volume, but in reality it only points up the surface ...

X Yes, all the great masters have kept the modeling more or less flat within the broad outlines.

Z This is why the new painting is becoming more and more conscious of the fact that painting requires the flat surface.

X But if you exaggerate this you become merely decorative.

Z Painting, for all that, doesn't have to become an art of ornamentation or display, or what is generally called decorative art. Byzantine mosaics, for instance, and old Chinese paintings are flat, yet they are not "decorative" as we understand the term today. What strikes us in these works is their great inwardness. Moreover, we can see by just looking around us that the natural plastic form, natural roundness, in a word, corporeality, gives us a purely materialist vision of objects, while the flat aspect of things makes them appear much more inward. The new painters have come to believe that modeling of any kind makes the picture too material. You may think this idea exaggerated, but the fact is that it exists, and is widely held among us.

X There are extremes in every field! I admit that, in principle, I incline to your ideas. But is "flatness" so necessary? When the contour dominates everything, isn't volume eliminated?

Z Partly yes, but not entirely. Since you are not so sympathetic to extremes, let us go back to our big contour. Let us see for a moment what painting does with it. Does it represent it in accordance with the normal vision we have of an object?

X No! The great masters of painting have emphasized the *tension* characterizing the contour.

Z And they exaggerated the normal vision of this tension . . .

X Does the painter ever represent things as seen normally?

Z We can agree that he departs from normal vision – so we do not differ on the principal question. But then you should allow another departure; what I have in mind is the most extreme transformation of the tension of the line until it finally becomes the absolutely straight line.

X That too is an extreme! According to Neo-Plasticism, everything should be expressed in flat surfaces and straight lines!

Z The flat surface and the straight line provide the means for saying everything . . . but it is the artist who does the saying.

X I quite agree with you on this point, but for my part I always prefer to follow nature!

Z By the same token you will have to accept, then, whatever is capricious and twisted in nature.

X The capricious is beautiful.

Z Beautiful, but tragic; if you follow nature you will not be able to vanquish the tragic to any real degree in your art. It is certainly true that naturalistic painting makes us feel a harmony which is beyond the tragic, but it does not express this in a clear and definite way, since it is not confined to expressing relations of equilibrium. Let us recognize the fact once and for all: the natural appearance, natural form, natural color, natural rhythm, natural relations, most often express the tragic.

Y When I compare this landscape with the one just a while ago, which did not contain this group of capricious trees, I feel indeed that whimsical, natural forms cannot give us the great feeling of repose to which we inwardly aspire.

Z Yes, in these trees we see that the stiffening of the contour and the flattening of the plastic form do not directly express the great feeling of repose of which you speak. You are quite right – it was better expressed in the landscape without trees of just a while ago.

Y It is true that earlier I felt this repose.

Z And if you recall what I said to you then about flatness and the straight line and principally about relations, you will have an idea of how this great feeling of repose could be shown plastically.

Y It is true . . . The natural appearance was entirely in the background, nothing was rounded, everything looked flat and straight, and as you said, the *constant relation* was emphatic. But do we always have to look past nature in order to achieve a conscious contemplation of peace?

Z We ought not to look past nature, rather we should look *through it*; we ought to see more deeply, our vision should be abstract, universal. Then externality will become for us what it really is: the mirror of truth. To achieve that, we must free ourselves from our attachment to the external, for only then do we transcend the tragic, and are enabled consciously to contemplate the repose which is within all things.

X Hence in contortion, too?

Z Yes, even in contortions, but we shall no longer represent them in art: we shall express only relations of balance.

Y But if so, what is the meaning of our personal position in an always capricious nature, and what is the meaning of the tragic element in this duality?

Z Deeper vision does not of course do away with cosmic tragedy. But when we look upon man as an organ of nature we can say that the alleviation of the tragic in each individual, and in all of mankind is the beginning of that abolition.

Y So we are to think that nature, despite her always changing aspects, is leading us toward a deeper vision in the end?

Z Yes, nature (the most external things) leads us to the consciousness of our being (the most inward things). And it is the same in art. It's not man's sensibility, or individual thought, but precisely nature, which is bringing painting toward a purified plastic form, toward a more stable aesthetic expression. It leads us to the contemplation of the universal, to the exaltation of the universal, and in a way, to objective progress. Every feeling, every individual thought, every purely human will, every particular desire, in a word, every sort of attachment, leads to the representation of the tragic, and makes it impossible to express pure repose.

Scene III

Night. A bright, starry sky above a stretch of sand.

Y What serenity! Here again are the repose and tranquility of the previous scene, when there were only the moon and the ground, and no capricious forms of groups of trees.

Z It seems to me that the repose we see now is even more complete in its expression, in form as well as color.

X For instance, the color of the sand now produces a quite different effect.

Z And notice: The green expanse of just a while ago did indeed give us an impression of richness and fullness, but this scarcely nuanced sand expresses a still more profound beauty. What strikes me most is that the stars now have an extraordinary effect.

Y Note how harmoniously they are placed.

Z Plastically, they fill space. They determine it, and in so doing express relations.

Y And with what grandeur! How far we are from human pettiness!

Z We can see now that something else is real besides the bustle of human pettiness. We see clearly how vain all that is: everything which separates has ceased to exist. We see a whole: in contrast with the changing will of man, we contemplate the unchangeable.

Y I envy your capacity for contemplation. I am not up to that yet, though I can vaguely sense the beauty of these things.

Z My view is that contemplation, plastic vision, has great importance for man. The closer contemplation brings us to a conscious vision of the unchangeable and the universal, the more the changeable, the individual, and human pettiness in us and around us, will seem futile to us.

Man is enabled by means of abstract-aesthetic contemplation to achieve conscious unity with the universal. All disinterested contemplation, to use Schopenhauer's term, elevates man above his natural condition. The natural man does his best to improve his material condition, and to safeguard his individuality; even his spiritual aspirations are not directed toward the universal, which remains unknown. But in aesthetic contemplation the individual is pushed to the background, and the universal appears. The deepest purpose of painting has always been to give concrete existence, through color and line, to this universal which appears in contemplation. The new painting, which is breaking away from the natural appearance and is characterized by a more clearly defined representation of the universal, should be seen as a manifestation of the spirit of our age. For our age, as it reaches ever higher

degrees of consciousness, becomes increasingly capable of transforming the various moments of contemplation into one unique moment, into one permanent contemplation.

Y That strikes me as the ideal state, for then life would be perpetual happiness.

Z And that is what it really is, in abstraction.

Y But in reality?

Z From the moment we are capable of contemplation, isn't abstraction reality?

Y I have not yet reached the point of contemplating the universal, but even so, I am beginning to understand that the universal can manifest itself – and once it does I can see that it might be as real as anything else.

Z Since it appears under a veil in nature, it is evidently not easily recognized by us, who are natural beings ourselves.

Y You said that plastically, the universal, expressed in the relation founded on the right angle, is the manifestation of the unchangeable. I could perceive this original relation in the landscape just a while ago, when there was only the stretch of ground and the moon. But now? Would you say that the primordial relation is as dominant in this starry sky?

Z I am going to try and show you that it is equally dominant now, and even that it has become in a way more intelligible to us, precisely because of the great number of stars. It appears in the *multiple* at this moment, but we are not obliged to think of it as multiple: it is enough that it has become visible. The primordial relation, which we clearly perceived a while ago, starting from a single point – the moon – now ceases to be a unity. For now we have before us as many fixed points as there are stars on the indefinite surface of the sky, with the result that just as many relations are expressed.

Y So I should apply to the stars what you said before about the moon?

Z Yes indeed. The stars are determinate points of light, just like the moon. In addition, the stars have the advantage of actually appearing like points, which was not the case with the moon. The multiplicity of stars thus suggests a far more complete representation of relations. I said before that the primordial relation must be represented within the multiple if it is to make us see the living reality. To represent the horizontal position and the upright position as a unity, without anything else, would evidently not be art, but at most a *symbol*. And something more: The primordial relation in itself represents something that is relatively determined by the natural position of man. But Neo-Plasticism aims precisely at representing nothing that is individually determined. To make the universal alone the object of feeling and contemplation, we must terminate all individual particularities. That is why in each given case Neo-Plasticism must, so to speak, break up the representation of the primordial relation – just as in this starry sky the relations cancel each other. And that is precisely why the harmony appears so powerfully here, much more so than in the lunar sky we saw before.

Rhythm, too, springs from multiplicity. For us humans rhythm is in a way the plastic expression of life, which always makes and remakes unity out of the particular.

X will agree with me on this score. Now the multiplicity of the particular gives rise to a rhythm which to some extent abolishes the contortion inherent in things. Likewise the multiple expression of the primordial relation creates a more internal rhythm which, in turn, abolishes what is absolute in the primordial relation. It is this difference that clearly separates the old plasticism from the new: naturalistic painting aimed at stressing the rhythm in the representation while the new art must precisely eliminate the natural rhythm as much as possible. It is true that in Neo-Plasticism the rhythm remains, although interiorized to a great extent, and that it is even a changing rhythm by virtue of the inequality of the relations of measurement through which the relation of position, that is to say the primordial relation, is expressed. But it is just through this that the new plasticism remains a living reality for us humans.

Y X understands this question of rhythm better than I, but I must say that I have always considered the starry sky more beautiful than the sky with moon. The stars seem like points – isn't it possible that the point, which has no form, liberates us from everything that limits or produces forms?

Z Because the stars seem like points, they speak less of themselves and more of the primordial relation – at least to those of us who have the gift of abstract vision. But the point as such, seen visually, speaks to us at most as a luminous apparition: in itself it neither expresses nor represents anything. It cannot liberate us from limitation, because it says nothing definite about the universal. Seen visually – that is to say, with just our physical eyes – the point itself expresses no relation, and hence cannot destroy our individuality. And it is precisely this individuality which continues to create forms, even where form does not appear directly.

Now we never see a point, but points. And these points create forms. The line appears plastically between two points; between several points, several lines. And the starry sky we look up at is now showing us innumerable points. All are not equally accented: one star shines more brightly than another. And these uneven light values produce forms in their turn. Think of the constellations: they too are forms. I merely mean to say that form is not eliminated from the starry sky when we see it as it appears naturally.

Y Just the same, you consider the peace felt here more complete than in the flat sky without stars lit up only by the moon.

Z As I said before, the point itself is a vague thing, while these various luminous points give determinateness to the indeterminateness of the sky. They express, though in a way that is merely visual, the relation in a certain form, for instance, as geometric figures that veil the balanced relation; but if we see *through* natural relations, we can achieve a direct vision of this perfect relation. We see the primordial relation of one star to another in the diversity of measurements: we merely have to arrange these harmoniously to obtain a plastic representation of pure equilibrium.

Y It is my impression that the very special serenity of the starry sky is due to the geometrical relation of the stars to each other.

Z Everything which seems geometric in nature, possesses plastically the depth proper to geometry. But geometry can appear both in the rectilinear form and in

the curve. Now, the straight line is a "fulfillment" of the curve, which is much more in conformity with nature. In the starry sky, we see many curved lines (that is why it remains in this natural state) which demand rectilinear fulfillment. For in this way the natural appearance is destroyed, and the greatest inner force can be plastically expressed. In art, as well as in conscious contemplation, the curve must be corrected by the straight line.

X But wouldn't nature have to be transformed visually to that end, and isn't nature perfect in itself?

Z Nature is perfect, but in art man does not need perfect nature. Precisely because it is perfect. He needs, on the contrary, to represent what is inward. The natural appearance must be transformed to obtain a purer vision of nature.

Y But isn't that dangerous?

Z There is a general vision, which is more natural in a literal sense, and which is relative and defined by things. For instance, a horse is a horse for everybody. This objective vision is true, or rather, is true appearance in so far as truth exists outside our human ideas. But there is also a more subjective vision, which begins in us, and is primarily determined by the human pettiness of our ideas. And this subjective vision is most dangerous, so long, that is, as it has not matured – for once it has matured it again becomes objective, for at that moment man transcends the subjective stage. The objective vision is the true vision, even for the natural man: for him, too, it contains the unchangeable. But for the more inward man, the unchangeable appears differently: he sees it interiorized. For him all things are equally beautiful, for they are all essentially *one*. But then he sees all things as equally perfect, and no particular aspect of things can continue to be real for him. This distinguishes him from other men, who also say that everything is equally beautiful, and yet are illogical enough to go on representing the different appearances of things.

Y I see now why Neo-Plasticism is not interested in subject matter, and yet . . . don't you prefer this starry sky to an unorganized landscape?

Z As artists we are still largely natural beings, and some degree of natural appearance is necessary to us, because only through it are we able to see perfection. So that a more vague appearance of the perfect irritates us. In this starry sky the capricious and contorted elements have achieved an approximation to the straight line and this enables us to see perfection in it.

Y I am beginning to understand also the choice of subjects in your previous period: your subjects never were capricious. Was it always a feeling for the straight line that prompted you to paint?

Z Since the straight line is the most perfected, the profoundest element in ourselves and in things, doesn't that go without saying?

Y I feel that this starry sky is the perfect and the good, even as it appears now!

Z There is beauty in life when man is in harmony with his personal vision. But the great value of the *true* is that man is not normally in this harmony. I am sure you will be led by the evolution of your plastic vision to replace the curve with the purer straight line.

Y So nature is nothing more than a kind of means for making us conscious of the perfect.

Z The fact is that the external – the most external – discloses to us the most deeply internal, just as the imperfect teaches us the perfect – so all traditional wisdom tells us.

X But what value is there in a representation that is not naturalistic? Can't we learn to see every representation in an absolute way, even as we learn to see nature?

Z Representation according to nature is not itself nature; moreover, art is not nature. A representation according to nature is always weaker than nature, and from the point of view of art, nature does not express the balance of relations in a definite way; this is precisely the task of art.

Y I realized that another form of representation was necessary when we spoke of the tragic impression of the rising moon. If we consider nature as it generally appears to us, it is impossible, it seems to me, to escape the tragic.

Z Yes, when we look at nature with our natural vision alone, it is impossible to avoid the tragic vision. Thus a deeper vision is necessary. Only he can escape from tragic emotion who has learned, precisely by cultivating pure plastic vision, to fashion the universal from the particular.

Y I see now that a pure plastic art can aid man's progress; for such art might help the ordinary man to accept the elimination of the natural and the individual.

Z While Neo-Plasticism is an end in itself, it also raises man to a conscious vision of the universal, just as naturalistic painting made him unconsciously see things in a naturalistic way.

Y The naturalistic vision . . . Yes, I admit that the beauty of nature never fully satisfies me: it generally makes me melancholy, despite its harmony, despite its great charm. Nor can I enjoy without mixed feelings a beautiful summer evening. On such occasions, I feel very clearly how everything should be, and at the same time my inability to adjust my life to my vision.

Z I reproach no one for being selfish! By being selfish we at least strive for something. In the present instance, the goal striven for is beauty. Nevertheless we can arrive in a purer way at the realization of the beautiful by welcoming it completely, by forgetting ourselves in contemplation. And then, the beautiful, gathered into the self, will be reflected in all things.

Y Yes, but one has to be capable of that; not everybody is.

Z One has to have training to be sure, or one has to be an artist. The artist can find complete fulfillment in the beautiful, at least occasionally. However, there are things which bring sadness to him too, as to all men who see plastically. But such sadness is different: it is sadness induced by the tragic manifestations in the world around us. It is not due to our tragic impotence in the face of the beauty that our own individuality attempts to

fashion. In general, as I remarked before, external nature will in some way affect our human nature, so long as we are men. It is as men that we confront external nature, in other words, we are both nature and non-nature. We are no longer natural enough to be entirely united with nature, and we are not yet spiritual enough to be entirely free from it.

Y I remember now what a philosopher said once about painting. He said that we interiorized the external appearance in art so long as we ourselves were not sufficiently inward.

Z Is this how he justified non-naturalistic painting?

Y No, on the contrary. He said that natural reality could be our means of expression once we had become sufficiently inward. Hence he foresaw that art in the future would return to the appearances of external nature.

Z The conclusion he draws from his proposition does not seem to me very logical. Did he think that man, once he had arrived at such inwardness, would still be so human, i. e. dual, partaking of both mind and nature, as to desire or to create a naturalistic art? And did he think that such an evolved spirituality, superior to nature, could be realized in any near future? Would it not be more modest to admit that we are still very imperfect men, who are not sufficiently inward to do without interiorizing nature in art? For my part, I think your philosopher is, despite himself, pleading the cause of the new art!

Y It seems to me that you are right, providing that "inwardness" is given a sufficiently profound meaning.

Z If it is not given a profound meaning, the proposition means nothing whatever, for it is impossible to go beyond natural nature if one has not achieved a very great inwardness! Yes indeed, the means to spiritual progress lies in the interiorization of nature in plastic art. Needless to say, when the man who creates aesthetically becomes really inward, he will feel the need to externalize his new inner identity, since every artist necessarily embodies in his art what he is in himself. In general, the relatively more conscious man sees nature "differently" from the relatively unconscious man, I mean the man living on the plane of sensation.

Y I also think that the unconscious man is more strongly affected by nature and that the younger we are, the more we are governed by nature's influence.

Z When we are young and unconscious we become the plaything of everything around us. We have no solid conviction *within* us, and we cannot cope with all the things that assail us from outside. Our interiority, what I called our "subjective vision," is not in harmony with nature as it appears objectively: our inwardness is weak, the objective appearance is powerful. But from the moment that we develop a self, or a more conscious autonomy, we are able to oppose a great inner force to the great force outside us, and thus we can escape its pressure.

Y That possibility makes life beautiful! Happy are the strong old men!

Z There is a time for youth and weakness, and a time for old age and strength! Let us comfort ourselves with the thought that we are constantly growing.

Y But nature, alas, is always equally strong, equally cruel!

Z Nature is ahead of us! The physical universe has reached its culminating point, while man, being spiritual as well as physical, can reach his point of perfection only in a remote future.

Y That is true: the human body, physiological man, does not evolve any more; if any evolution is taking place it must come from the mind's increasing contemplation of itself.

Z We might say that in cosmic perspective, man is now evolving in an inverse sense: from matter to mind.

Y But your aim is certainly not to divorce the physical from the spiritual?

Z By no means! The physical too is, generally speaking, an expression of the spirit, though it is an expression of a lower order. But man is a very special being, situated right in the middle of existing things. Through physical life, he attains self-awareness; thus he also exists as self-awareness. Alongside of, or rather *within* his habitual life, there is another life – an abstract life; we must take this life into account if we are to achieve a pure conception of art. For a clear understanding of the evolution of art as it moves from natural reality to abstract reality, we must realize that man continues to evolve even physically, but in the direction of greater interiorization. We can call this evolution spiritual, but we could also call it a reverse evolution of the physical. This contradictory growth is generally uneven, and disturbing for the two factors, the physical and the spiritual. Yet the equivalence of these factors is required for the maintenance of balance. Advanced spiritual development cannot be real in a man in whom the natural has not attained equal maturity. This is why we see so many people relapsing into a sort of pseudo-spirituality. Thus an expression of real spirituality, hence of real inwardness, is not possible to the art of this age in a traditionally external form.

Y I see more and more clearly that the new painting can no longer express itself in the naturalistic form. I accept the inevitable, and resign myself to the destruction of the natural.

Z Providing that this destruction implies reconstruction, as it does in Neo-Plasticism – the equivalence and unity of the expression of the physical and the spiritual. The natural should only be cleared of what is most external, but not demolished: then the apparent unity will become duality, and this apparent duality can become pure truth.

Y Yes, I have already read something about that in *De Stijl*. Thinking superficially, people suppose that Neo-Plasticism either demolishes or negates the natural.

Z Seen superficially, that is the way it actually appears, and we cannot expect everybody to look upon what is new other than superficially. But we spoke just a while ago of nature and of man's confrontation of it. Something issues from nature and something issues from us; we might say that we react to nature, but then it is nature once again which has the last word. In short, nature expresses itself, and we for our part are rather inclined to fantasy. It is only in the aesthetic moment of contemplation that we stop fantasizing; then we are open to the revelation of the true, we see pure beauty.

Y You said that nature expresses itself in the tragic. Is the tragic beautiful?

Z The tragic can be beautiful; everything can be beautiful. The apparently good and the apparently evil can both be beautiful. A revelation of truth may seem cruel to us, but kindness has no monopoly of beauty. I remarked, on another occasion, that there are degrees of beauty. A relation of balance has a deeper beauty than an expression of the tragic. Nature reveals the true as well as the beautiful, but these are always veiled by natural appearances; it is this veil covering the truth which contains the tragic.

Y You say, then, that nature expresses the tragic, and that at the same time we have the tragic within us?

Z Subjectively, the tragic is produced by the domination of nature in us; objectively, by the domination of nature outside us.

Y And this domination can be made harmless only by the growth of our whole being, our externality and our inwardness, our nature and our mind, is that it?

Z Made harmless . . . a more balanced relation of the two can be attained today, but only in a very far distant future could the content of tragedy in us be made entirely harmless. This is also true of the mastery of the tragic outside us. Yes, this too will be achieved, but in a very, very distant future, when we will be able to look upon what is outside us as parts of ourselves, or rather when we will be able to consider ourselves as organs of nature outside us, for that is the indispensable condition for the total interiorization of our entire being, while now such interiorization takes place only in consciousness. Once we are at this point, there will be no natural appearance: duality will become real unity.

Y If it is the duality which produces the tragic, how could it be present in the natural appearance, which seems to have the character of unity?

Z The appearance of unity, but not real unity. In nature, the most external is clearer than the pure expression of inwardness. We might almost say that the purest expression of the most inward content is veiled by the bizarre or the contorted. This fact accounts for the tragic in everything visible. For what is most internal, and what is most external, appear to be one, but are not. Pure unity is expressed in a duality of equivalents. When we want to express real unity plastically, we are forced to resort to an apparent dualism.

Y I see now the meaning of your dualism of appearances, and I feel that painting should set up as its primary means of expression just such a dualism of equivalents substituting this for natural form in natural color.

Z A dualism of equivalents could yield more happiness by producing more harmony in life, too – in all reality. But in our age, how is such a dualism to be discovered? For in the nature-and-man dualism the terms are not equivalent. The terms of the appearance-force dualism in nature, and of the inner-outer dualism, are not equivalent either. Nor does the dualism of mind and matter, or of the masculine and the feminine, express an equivalence – thus the solution can be found only in ourselves. To make possible the equivalence of the two in each case, our consciousness will have to mature to such a point that the

natural-material element will lose its dominating force, and the spiritual will become clear. In this purified dualism, unity is possible. However, the external does not change in itself, it is only changed for us: we experience it in its deepest being, that is to say, in abstraction.

Y And it is through this evolution of the mind that the expression of art also changes?

Z Through it alone. In this phase of abstract-real experience, art, confronting the manifestations of nature, becomes quite naturally abstract.

Y I still don't see the beauty of Neo-Plasticism, but I can conceive that it is perfectly logical and true in itself.

X Despite all you have said, nature, as it appears to me, expresses the loftiest harmony in certain of its aspects, and I cannot imagine that there could be a more perfect expression of this harmony than the one provided by nature.

Z The word *harmony* does not have the same meaning for each of us: we all think of it differently. In nature, there is, to be sure, a natural harmony, but in abstraction, the balanced relation yields a quite different notion of the harmonious. This notion is, however, relative and is perfected in time, as is proved by the successive forms of art and also, to some extent, by the life of each artist. The beauty of the artist's effort lies in this: it tends toward an always purer expression of harmony. Through plastically expressing each new vision of the beautiful, the artist feels ever more strongly that the harmony revealed in all that exists is too powerful to be rendered truly by any art based on perception alone. Thus, on each contact with the visual, the artist "re-works" it, striving for a greater plastic harmony, as you know from your own experience. After ecstasy comes frustration, followed by a new plastic conception. As he reflects and compares, the artist cannot fully enjoy the harmony he has realized. It may be that the harmony realized by Neo-Plasticism will turn out to be more satisfying than any other, but even this will remain far below the idea of harmony we bear within us but which has never yet been brought to full consciousness.

But to the living beauty of nature, which acts on all our senses at once, we owe the awareness that the harmony of all existing things can become so powerful. It is not just the *visual* appearance in nature which causes our emotion.

Y I think you are quite right – what has to be expressed is harmony, not the natural appearance.

Z That is the very reason why art has arrived at Neo-Plasticism. In life, too, the most important thing is to arrive at harmony.

X Let's concede that in art the external should be interiorized: but that doesn't seem to me to be so easy in life. It seems to me that you are not reckoning with reality.

Z Our art is ahead of life at the moment, but life will soon catch up with it.

The domination of the material factor must be decreased, and is in fact decreasing. The idea of a deeper harmony conceived in terms of the dualism we speak of, is actually at work in contemporary life. For instance, take the modern dance, I mean the regular dance steps of couples. Formerly, the music and the dancing couple flowed in some way into each other:

the curved line was a synthetic expression of this fact. Today the dance, the dance which has some subtlety, as well as the music, to which, or rather *against* which one dances, expresses a duality of two equivalent elements. The straight line is the plastic expression of this fact. In music, the various rhythms oppose each other, as they oppose the melody, and as the steps of the dance oppose each other. Thus a much greater unity is achieved.

Y But that is almost unrealizable, that would. . .

Z It requires much effort and training – that is always the price of equivalence.

X It always seemed to me that equivalence involves monotony, but in thinking of the dance I begin to see that this might not be so. But – in the dance we are dealing with an explicit duality.

Z Precisely: an explicit duality is necessary in art as well as in the expression of life itself. Equivalence is neither equality nor similarity; no more than any quantity whatever could contain within itself the quality of being equal. Equality would doubtless lead in life to inactivity, in art to monotony. That is why in Neo-Plasticism we always have two equivalent terms, i. e., an explicit duality. The rhythm is *one* term, and the unchanging relation is the *other*, the changing relation of measurement is one term, and the unchanging relation of position is the *other*. Among the means of expression, color is the *one*, and the flat rectangular shape is the *other*. In the relation of position, the horizontal is the *one*, and the vertical the *other*. And so on. Precisely because this duality is differentiated, it is very difficult for the abstract-realist painter to find the balance of the two extremes. If he succeeds in expressing one of these, we soon see that this was done to the detriment of the other, and if it is possible for him to achieve the pure expression of the *other*, then the *first* will suffer. But by dint of hard work he can obtain a relatively satisfactory solution of the problem.

X But in the dance, a certain stiffness is maintained despite naturalness.

Z That is very relative: if you compare the rigid lines of present-day fashions with natural clothes or with the naked form, you will recognize this yourself. Moreover the dance of which you are thinking is a rather inferior art: pure art is much more exacting.

X Just the same I cannot accept the idea that plastic expression should be sought outside of nature, outside of reality.

Z Nor I, either – in fact it shouldn't. Rather it should be sought *in* nature, *in* reality. And that's what art has always done: through natural realism it has gradually come to abstract realism. And this by way of pure plastic vision.

Y You said that plastic vision implies union with the universal. But what does that mean practically speaking? Will people continue to see things as they appear plastically to us?

Z To see plastically is to contemplate consciously: it is to see *through*. It is to distinguish clearly, to see truly. To see plastically leads to the making of comparisons, and hence to the seeing of relations, or, better still, to the seeing of relations, and hence to the

making of comparisons. It also means seeing things as objectively as possible. Moreover, plastic vision implies action: by plastic vision, we destroy the natural appearance, and reconstruct that appearance abstractly. Our plastic vision so to speak corrects our habitual, natural vision – thus we reduce the individual to the universal, with which we become united. So we see how pure aesthetic vision makes it possible for the true to be expressed by the beautiful, though in still veiled fashion. But this beauty cannot be purely external beauty, for the very simple reason that pure plastic vision sees *through* things; thus, to ordinary sight, it has the character of *abstract beauty*.

X Let's suppose nature appeared to us in this abstract way . . . then wouldn't everything be dead and meaningless?

Z This wouldn't be due to the abstract appearance, but to our natural nature. However, I said before: "Art is not nature," and now I say further: "Nature is not art," and ought not to be. Only through man can nature become art. For that to happen, the human mind has only to transform, or to reform in plastic terms, all that nature causes our human natures to feel. Haven't you noticed that the geometric structure of our urban surroundings is highly abstract when compared with rustic nature? An abstract representation can certainly arouse emotions in us. I remember something which may be pertinent here. Some time ago, at the beginning of the war, a film was shown in which a large part of the earth was projected two-dimensionally. Then, suddenly, there appeared, in the form of little squares, the invading armies, starting from Germany. Confronting these, always in the form of little squares were the armies of the Allies. The terrible world event was shown, not partially or in details, as in a natural representation, but in all its magnitude.

X I recognize that such a representation is useful for treating an event of world dimensions, but, as a rule, a natural representation would move us more.

Z Pure plastic vision regards everything as an event of world dimensions. I will grant, though, that our natural feelings are more easily stirred by a natural representation.

X I recall a film showing a fight between a lobster and a polyp. Here again two forces were set against each other for their mutual destruction, but in this case there was much more realism.

Z That can be argued. How we are most moved, and by what, is a purely personal question. All I wanted to bring out was that an abstract representation is capable of stirring us. One cannot even say that the example I gave is any kind of argument for an abstract plasticism, for in that example we knew what it was all about: the plastic expression given by the violent displacement of elements was due in part to the idea of "struggle," which was known in advance. But this shows quite clearly that purely abstract signs can be means of expression.

Y An abstract representation gives a more universal impression, that I am sure of; the particular disappears and we deal only with the general. The diagrammatic representation of natural things, like the world in this film, gives us a more general notion of things.

Z A projection on a flat surface is far superior to a natural, visual representation; also, it makes us see purer relations. The Cubists understood that perspective representation disturbs and weakens the appearances of things, while two-dimensional representation renders them more purely. It was precisely the desire to represent things as perfectly as possible that led to painting in the flat. In using juxtaposed and overlapping planes, Cubism strove not only for a purer image of things, but also for a purer plasticism.

X But don't we always see things from the same angle of vision?

Z That is what the individual and subjective opinion claims, but as soon as we consider ourselves as forming part of a whole, as soon as we take into account not only our temporal position with respect to things, but all possible positions, in short, as soon as we begin to see universally, we no longer see things from a single angle of vision. It is a heartening fact that modern painting displays an ever more conscious tendency towards a purer and more many-sided representation of things, for this shows that the spirit of the age is seeking the universal with more consciousness and more precision. The new tendencies have been ascribed to greater consciousness of the fourth dimension; and in fact, the idea of the fourth dimension manifests itself in the new art, through the total or partial destruction of the three-dimensional or natural order, and through the construction of a new plasticism in accordance with a less limited view.

Y And this wider view is a result of the refinement of vision - is that what you mean?

Z Yes, it is the refinement of our vision that has led to the pure aesthetic-plastic vision which gave rise to Neo-Plasticism.

Y Isn't plastic vision possible only for the man of aesthetic sensibility?

Z Even outside the domain of the aesthetic, plastic vision meets the aspirations of modern man: it is nothing but the conscious perception of truth. Plastic vision can have a beneficial effect on our thinking. We shall achieve a far more certain knowledge of reality by this method than by relying on intuition, for our intuitions remain vague. Generally speaking, pure plastic vision will reduce our attachment to the particular and foster our understanding of the universal. Then our actions too will acquire a more universal significance.

Y Then the influence of abstraction on social life, among other things, will be very great.

Z The pure plastic vision should set up a new society just as in art it set forth a new plasticism. This will be a society based on the equation of the material and the spiritual, a society composed of balanced relationships.

Scene IV

Close by, a mill clearly outlines its mass against the bright starry sky. The motionless wings of the mill form a cross.

X Here again is real grandeur, I don't think you will be unmoved by it. Just look at those wings!

Z I find a mill like that really beautiful. Especially when, as now, it is so close that we don't have the distance to see it or paint it in the field of a normal perspective. It is very hard to render plastically anything seen so close up: one has to resort to a freer type of expression. I have sometimes tried to paint objects a short distance away, precisely because then they seem more impressive.

To return to this mill, the cross formed by the wings attracts me especially. But since I regard the position of the right angle as the basis of everything, these wings do not seem to me more beautiful than other things. From the plastic point of view, they are even at a disadvantage. This is because we so readily associate a particular and somewhat literary idea with the form of the cross. It is for this reason that Neo-Plasticism always breaks up the traditional form of the cross.

X How pure the blue of the sky is next to the blackness of the mill!

Z Yes, the sky is pure, but so is the mill! Even though the mill seems very dark and colorless, it would be impossible to render our impression of the sky and of the mill with bright and dark colors alone. I have often experienced that. In a drawing, light and shade can do, but color – that's another matter! Blue calls for a color which counterbalances it. The Impressionists already exaggerated color, the neo-Impressionists and the Luminists went still further. To speak of my own experiences: I sometimes got a certain satisfaction from painting a mill red against the sky's blue.

X But that's not what we see now.

Z Our new vision is different from our optical vision, but the inner vision is not always conscious, and then – no matter how spontaneous this inner vision – we cling more or less to the optical vision, especially after the first burst of emotion has subsided. It is thanks to the impact of this first intuitive emotion that the studies and rough sketches of naturalistic painters are stronger and more beautiful than their pictures. Let us never forget that the aesthetic view is different from the habitual one. In general, what alone counts in art is to produce an emotion of the beautiful. Thus to the degree that we feel the purity of color before us more intensely, we should express it more purely. To put the matter better: when we learn to see more aesthetically, our task will be to express our emotion of the beautiful in a clear manner, and in terms of precise proportions and measurements. Then we can break completely with optical vision.

X But some magnificent things have nevertheless been done without going to such exaggeration!

Z What some call exaggeration others will look upon as merely a weak means of expression. Why argue for an individualistic art when history clearly reveals a tendency towards an ever stronger and purer expression of visible things? Our age beats the measure of life with greater force, the accelerated movement produces a more lively emotion, and this in turn requires a stronger expression. But we can also say that modern consciousness is turning more and more from the vague to the precise, or that the spirit of this age requires more clarity.

X There is no lack of exaggeration in this new age, but that may be due to pure imitation.

Z If this were so, we wouldn't see one and the same tendency everywhere, and in fields that are independent of each other. Let me add that human beings and artists especially hesitate to follow *the new* until they have understood it to be the true. Such understanding is still rare, but wherever it exists, the new can somehow be perceived superficially, because man is ready for such perception. And so there can be no question of what you call "imitation."

X But to return to the mill, if exaggerating the color proved satisfactory, why didn't you continue to paint in that manner, why did you drop all reference to the outward form?

Z Because with it the object continued to be present as an independent element in the plastic expression. And with the object present, the plastic expression is not *exclusively* plastic. When the object is represented, the emotion of the beautiful remains limited; that is why the object had to be eliminated.

Scene V

Garden with trees trimmed in a stylized pattern. A house.

X Look! Here you have simple lines. As for me, I like nature untrammelled!

Y All the same, I find these trees beautiful; they go well with the lines of the house.

Z Yes, that is what gives the ensemble its unity. Man looked for a point of contact with nature, that is why he "changed" nature. And the way he went about it shows how strong is his will to perfection.

X However, this is not the perfection of the straight line: look at those round forms over there.

Z That's why it must be said that perfection was only half attained; there can be no question of real perfection in the real world. What we have here is, in great part, no more than a generalization of forms, aimed at making the forms stand out, not at eliminating them. So we see here, as everywhere in whimsical nature, equivalence through form, not equivalence as such, that is to say, pure equivalence.

Y From what you have said, I gather that you would prefer a different solution. First you would have eliminated the form, and then you would have striven for a balance of relations. But it seems to me that everything would have to be flat for such a result to be possible.

Z With this garden we leave the domain of painting and enter that of sculpture. In dealing with three-dimensional form, the sculptor must act differently from the painter. The painter has his three colors, plus black and white; the sculptor has only black and white. The sculptor must seek the straight line in three dimensions. His plasticism necessarily has bulk. But it is possible for him to reduce the round form, which is the essentially naturalistic form, to the prismatic form, thus again eliminating the particular aspect of the form by means of oppositions and interruptions. This is why it seems to me that, as far as Neo-Plasticism is concerned, the sculptor must explore the composition of prisms.

X But then wouldn't sculpture become architecture?

Z Not in the least. Architecture remains a construction in terms of space. It has its practical requirements. Sculpture is free.

X So according to your view this garden is closer to pure sculpture than a sculptured image?

Z Most certainly. I think the sculptured image should be completely eliminated from sculpture.

Scene VI

Church façade. It appears as a flat surface lightly illuminated by the glow of the city against the darkness of the sky.

Z Here is another reality, but still not abstract.

Y Yet everything in it is flat and geometric!

Z The abstract is inwardness brought to its clearest definition, or externality interiorized to the highest degree. Thus there is no place in abstraction for the indeterminateness this wall exhibits in places, nor for certain forms we see repeated here.

Y But this church was surely built in terms of a style; do you think the architect hasn't found the right proportions?

Z In the first place, the pure relation of equivalents was not sought for, but only harmony. In architecture the outside is expressed in terms of the inner construction. When the latter does not have a pure equilibrium the outside cannot have it either. That is why architectural construction has to change completely; architecture, too, should be pure plasticism.

Y So old architecture of no matter what style never suggests abstract plasticism?

Z Since an absolutely new architecture does not exist, it becomes the task of painters to step in where architecture, as it is generally practiced, remains behind the times, i. e., to create an equilibrium of pure relations or, in other words, to actualize abstract reality in art.

Y Yet architecture is a tangible reality.

Z A tangible reality is in no way prevented from being an abstract reality. A painting, too, is tangible in a sense. Neo-Plasticism is achieving today in painting what later on we shall see around us in sculpture and in architecture.

Y So you think that Neo-Plasticism will some day prevail in these arts?

Z Prevail . . . it will probably take a long time for that to happen. It is always isolated groups that move ahead, following the tracks of isolated individuals. Even today some houses show a tendency toward Neo-Plasticism, but much time will have to pass for this tendency to spread to entire cities. Our surroundings will for a long time yet be deprived of abstract reality. Meanwhile, lacking something better, our salvation must be in abstract-realist painting.

Y I suppose that our present towns and villages shock you a great deal.

Z In some ways, yes. Individualistic and ephemeral emotions are practically the only ones ever expressed in the construction of villages and of some small towns. The same is true of many constructions in big cities, but there everything is much more

resolved in the mass. In a great capital, the transient features are less strongly pronounced, and purely utilitarian beauty has greater scope.

Y What? Do you mean to say that something purely utilitarian can be beautiful?

Z The useful as such can indeed be beautiful: countless objects of everyday use show this. A very simply conceived drinking cup can be as beautiful as an automobile or an airplane. The things characteristic of our age, the works of engineers – bridges, factories, iron and concrete constructions – all have beauty. Perhaps the great mistake of the architects is that they strive for beauty.

While the conscious expression of the beautiful is of the highest value, the conscious striving for beauty can lead to many errors. So long as we have not attained conscious aesthetic expression, it is preferable to concentrate exclusively on the useful. When we do this in a proper way we are concerned with life, or, more accurately, to interpret life is to be concerned with the useful. And is not art itself an interpretation of life? It is precisely because art has failed to interpret life, in the sense I just indicated, that it has gone astray into the agreeable, the pretty, the expensive, the decorative, and other such things.

To return to your question; I will say again that equilibrium is a law of nature which is true in its domain. Thus all manifestations of equilibrium in matter are beautiful themselves. Hence, if man merely strives for pure balance, his productions will be beautiful by virtue of that very fact.

X Here you are lowering the artist to the level of the ordinary man! Then what becomes of emotion?

Z The artist must be nothing more than a man, merely a human being who expresses himself or, if you like, creates aesthetically – but he should be nothing less than that. And that is not a little! That is everything. Such a man is in fact moved and stirred by equilibrium, and by the values based on it, but not by some accessory elements. Thus he cannot help having emotions. And it is the law of equilibrium that causes him to endow his creations with ever greater equilibrium, to strive for and to create beauty, without thinking of beauty. If the artist were not that, then anybody, your ordinary man, without any aesthetic emotion, would be ahead of him, for the latter produces, without emotion, a certain beauty, solely through his emotions and intelligence. The engineer, for instance, devotes his life exclusively to construction, and he creates pure relations by sheer necessity, and necessity too is truth. Take for instance the Paris subways: the beauty of the construction, which might be too cold to satisfy an artistic sensibility, is made alive by the lights – which are there merely because they are a necessity. Modern engineering works have the special merit of being pure expressions of a modern necessity: old forms and styles are abandoned more and more – again out of necessity, for the new materials require new forms of construction.

Y How beautiful, this spectacle of spontaneously developing beauty!

Z Yes – despite everything. We see pure beauty appear of itself in works of architecture – factories, housing developments, stores, and so on – constructed out of

necessity, for utilitarian reasons. But as soon as *luxury* comes in, people begin to think of art, and pure beauty is destroyed.

X Then everything should look poor and simple?

Z Beauty never seems poor, and austere simplicity is preferable to ugly luxury, at least so long as actual life cannot achieve the real wealth and the true sensibility of art. Let the rich man use costly materials for the construction and furnishing of his dwelling, but let him not strive for ill-proportioned ornamentation. Let artists give their entire attention to relations of equivalence in forms and colors and their effects will never be poor, even though the expression depends, to a great extent, on the materials used. But for this to take place on a large scale, social life itself must first be purified: from social life so purified, a new beauty will rise in the most natural way.

Y A new man is needed for the new beauty!

Z The new man should indeed be very different from the old type of man. The new man carries out material tasks, but he does so out of necessity. He carries them out as well as he ever did, but his attitude towards them is different. He lives amid material things, without enjoying them or suffering from them, as he once did: he uses his physical being as if it were a perfect machine, but without being a machine himself. And precisely there lies the difference: formerly man was himself a machine, now he utilizes the machine, be it his own physical being, or the machine he constructs. To this last he relegates heavy work as much as possible, while he concentrates on spiritual inner things. Broadly speaking, he makes use of his very soul as if it were a machine, while he himself becomes a *conscious mind*. We can define this difference as it appears in art as follows: the old art is an unconscious representation of harmony by awareness of material things, the new art is, on the contrary, the representation of balanced relationships by the mind's awareness of itself.

Y Until now I have seen very little of this new man, at least in the sense you mean!

Z I posit this new man only as a *type*. Of course in the real world only imperfect specimens of this type appear – but they do appear! And it is perfectly logical for them to be like strangers among men of the old type, and to regard all the others produce and do as alien to him. For instance, the new man will feel that this church is alien to him.

Y Yet it gives me a very peculiar sensation of grandeur, of seriousness, of repose – something like the impression of this starry sky.

Z That is certainly the case, and on this point we are in complete agreement. These things: grandeur, seriousness, repose are fundamental elements. In the last analysis they are not bound up with any particular appearance. But what is the source of your impression? The forms, perhaps, which are so blurred and even partly effaced by the night? Yes, that's just it: the fundamental elements are expressed plastically when they are no longer veiled by the particular forms – they are now revealed more clearly than they would be in broad daylight. If you experience your aesthetic emotion more profoundly, or, what amounts to the same thing, if you see in a plastically purer way, you will recognize that the fundamental elements are strongly influenced, yes, that they are even colored by form.

Y And when the form doesn't envelop things with a veil, we do it ourselves – isn't that the case? I remember how you showed that we transform and recreate what we see. This was when we talked about the stars; we associate forms with them despite ourselves.

Z Precisely. And this enables us to note a striking difference. When we saw the starry sky we were not bound to any given form, and we could easily turn to the spontaneous creation of forms. On the other hand, when we look at this church, our vision is governed by its form, and it is difficult for us to create others with it. In the last analysis, the difference lies in this: when we look at the church, we are determined by another force, when we look at the starry sky, we are determined by our own powers to create!

Y I find more pure beauty in the starry sky. The impression I have of it is quite different from the impression I have of this church, but I don't know how to analyze my impressions with precision. At times I might prefer the first, at other times the second.

Z Sensation is very complex, by the way. We ought to take into account ourselves, as well as the thing perceived. And I am expressly using the word "perceive" and not the word "see". For all our senses work together automatically. The true is expressed in each thing in a distinct way, and it is present to each man in a different way, and that is why it is good that there are so many kinds of things and so many kinds of men . . . this helps us to arrive at total truth.

Y But isn't union among men possible? After all, there is such a thing as "style" which expresses the unity of an epoch.

Z Grouped together, men are temporarily and relatively united; hence the possibility of styles. And it is in groups, too, that men seek progress. Some groups are ahead of others; this is why the old and the new can coexist.

Y In architectural construction the old survives for a long time.

Z With luck, that is . . .

Y This building carries me back to other times. And I find it very beautiful.

Z So it is, of course. But once our first aesthetic impression has passed, our feeling is defined and situated much better if we think of the past: we certainly see forms of a style that is not our own. These forms always contain something more or less descriptive.

X And why can't the descriptive be beautiful?

Z It can be, but purely plastic beauty is diminished by the descriptive element. The descriptive belongs to time and continually changes. Every appearance changes, everything moves, everything flows, as the ancients said long ago. Everything changes, and so do we – we are always "different."

Y And isn't that tragic? What becomes of your "firm support"?

Z In an external sense it is tragic, but in an inner sense, it means happiness. For this perpetual motion is neither useless nor without a goal. Deep behind all change is the unchangeable, which is of all ages, and which reveals itself as pure creative beauty. It is this beauty alone – veiled in this building by all sorts of forms – which is our living reality: it is universal beauty. The object of Neo-Plasticism is to make this clear. All styles have served

to unfold it slowly. Finally the time has come when balance can be expressed purely, by pure means, i. e., by relations of position and dimension in terms of the straight line.

Y It seems to me that it is precisely in architecture that this could easily be carried out.

Z That's the way it strikes me too. But we meet with great difficulties when we try to carry out this theme. We will master them.

Y When the spirit of the age demands clarity in everything, why does art generally remain backward?

Z Yes. . . . Why should universal beauty continue to appear in art under a veiled or covert form, while in the sciences, for instance, the trend is toward the greatest possible clarity? Why should art always continue to follow nature when every other field has left nature behind? Why doesn't art manifest itself as non-nature or the "other" in relation to nature? And what art is more appropriate than architecture to show us continually this "other"?

Is there any other art that constitutes our surroundings? Yes, the great task of architecture is to put us clearly and constantly in the presence of universal beauty, and to co-operate to this end with sculpture and painting, as one element in a homogeneous whole. When this idea is adopted by humanity, it will be realized, and the old notion will disappear of itself, no matter how enduring stones are! A new idea is revealed when things appear differently. We do not know how the old will disappear: what alone is important is to possess a solid image of the new. The great mistake, and the one that is most widespread, is to continue to think in obsolete terms. The fault lies with the setting, which recalls the past, although it is, on the other hand, the sight of the old which spurs the new spirit to act against it. The new spirit is for the strong man! The weak – who, alas, almost always have enough money to build – will have to follow. It is quite natural for modern man to feel a certain hostility to all the old things which surround him, precisely because they still surround him. This was very clearly expressed by the Futurists. But the real difficulty lies in creating something better, and, as long as we are incapable of it, the sweeping out of the old does not help us much. We see this in daily life: cities, and old villages destroyed by war, are reconstructed, but in an old style. Let us conclude, then, that as long as the old exists, it is necessary for it to exist. It is time that must do everything, but we ought to do everything in our power to shorten it. For it is quite possible to shorten the time.

Y How?

Z I told you before: by conceiving a solid image of the new as such. That each of us can do. The new must come to everyone. Architecture has only to realize in the domain of tangible things what painting has demonstrated in New-Plasticism. In the future, the architect and the engineer must bring about a real harmony between ourselves and our surroundings. Today we live in the midst of the old.

Y Living in the midst of the old, it is difficult even for the strong to keep from being carried along by the lazy current of old habits.

Z That is very true. What are our surroundings today? We live like strangers in someone else's house with furniture, rugs, utensils, and pictures that are not our own!

If we take a walk, the streets are not ours either! In the theater, it is still the same story. The film? With its antiquated morality on the one hand, and its naturalism on the other, it, too, is not of this time.

X Yet there is beauty in all this!

Z Beauty, yes, but infantile beauty. The old art is an art for children. Neo-Plasticism wants to be an art for adults. And just as the adult is a stranger to the child, the new man – for whose sake Neo-Plasticism exists – is a stranger to the old art. The life of the adult is not the same as the child's – but I'll speak of that again.

X There are adults, however, who do not understand Neo-Plasticism.

Z That comes from lack of information or from incapacity to see. A man's growth will vary with his disposition. I spoke of art as such. But to return to the beauty of the old: it would be better if it were not so beautiful. For then men perhaps would not continue to maintain it around them during their growth from childhood to adult life. Of course these stylish old houses are beautiful, and even this old furniture is very beautiful, but their beauty no longer moves us – it is a beauty that is not for us. I greatly appreciate the beauty preserved in the museums, but I feel strongly that we are surrounded with supposedly old objects which are far less valuable.

Y But doesn't being influenced by all that make for weakness?

Z It is precisely for the weak that I am fighting; the strong man goes his own way and constructs a new beauty. . . . Even though this beauty is not immediately tangible. But will there be a city, or just a dwelling for this new man? No, he'll be like someone ignored by society, a pariah!

X Then you would like to have new dwellings for each generation?

Z That is an idea for a Futurist architect. A better solution perhaps, would be to construct buildings of such a kind that very many generations could utilize them.

X But if each generation is different, as you said, from the others?

Z Despite everything, it would be perfectly possible, or rather it is becoming possible, to create buildings that are pure expressions of what is unchangeable, of what remains identical for each generation.

Scene VII

Z's studio

Y We saw many beautiful things this evening. What a pity that it is already over!

Z The evening is gone, but the beauty remains. We have not merely been contemplating it with normal vision: an interaction took place between us and the sensible world. And this must necessarily produce something. In us, it produces more or less clear images. These images remain within us and even gain force when we are alone with them and away from nature. Now it is these images, and not the objects we see, that are for us the real expressions of beauty. Train yourself in clear vision, and learn to preserve images of beauty: in the end, an identical image will permanently remain.

Y That certainly seems to be the ideal, but for a simple art lover it must be difficult to achieve.

Z True; but artists, because of an innate disposition, and because of the requirements of their craft, constantly form images of beauty, and preserve them.

The naturalistic painter tries to form a fixed image of the natural world. Because he forms it in terms of his particular emotion, the image will necessarily differ from ordinary vision.

The Cubist too tries to form in himself a fixed image of things. As he looks at things quite differently from the naturalistic painter, his image differs even more from ordinary vision and habitual perspective.

The abstract-realist painter, finally, also forms a fixed image of visible reality: he permits the latter to act on him, and achieves in his compositions an abstract expression of relations.

Thus we see the image of the beautiful developing in the artist and detaching itself in some way from things. And in this process of detaching itself from things, it slowly grows out of individual beauty and achieves universal beauty. The abstract image of simple relations is liberated from any limitation or attachment, and hence is also liberated from the tragic content of material and individual things; thus it becomes the purest expression of the universal. We cannot attain the universal if we remain attached to individual things: first these must be overcome within ourselves. Likewise, in art the universal cannot be exactly expressed within the naturalistic form – those who today teach faith in *universalism* ought to think of that.

Y In life, things are just as you say, no doubt about that; detachment is indispensable to attain the universal. In art, I don't know . . .

Z As things are in life, so they are in art, and vice versa. Our evolutionary

stage of life is manifested and contained in a freer conception of the beautiful. Just as evolution implies the destruction of the individual element when a new phase has reached maturity, so each conception of the beautiful destroys itself when it has reached the end of its growth.

Y It is regrettable that human evolution should be so uneven; those who have a mature conception of the beautiful remain isolated amidst the uncomprehending mass.

Z Alas! For we must not destroy a conception of the beautiful so long as it has not come to the end of its growth in us.

Y This does away with all hatred of those who think, or feel, differently from us.

Z To be sure. But the fact is that a certain type of attachment to tradition is disastrous. Often it is because of sluggishness or weakness that one does not desire, or dare, to destroy a conception of the beautiful which has already matured in the spirit of the age and reached the limit of its growth, and thus occupies the place belonging by rights to the new life. Man is a destroyer just as much as he is a creator and conserver – all ancient wisdom so describes him, adducing his noble origin as proof.

Y But through such a destructive spirit one destroys oneself, too. Above all, socially.

Z Without a doubt. In the present state of society we injure ourselves materially when we break with the old forms of life. In general, we injure ourselves in breaking with anything. At least momentarily. But the *new* does not ask these questions: it does not watch the clock.

Y There you have the reason why many artists remain obstinately attached to the old forms, even realizing this.

X And isn't it better for them to go on producing a beauty that is already known, than to stop producing beauty altogether?

Z For my part I prefer the last solution; I like radical solutions, as you know.

But it is true that the situation of the artist is more saddening with each new generation: artistic expression moves even further away from nature, and at the same time art becomes more and more incomprehensible to the materialist – who, in our society, is precisely the one with the means to buy. The new has to exist for some time before it can acquire any material value. Think that, even today, only part of the public has come as far as Van Gogh!

Y It's a pity that in its early stages the new must occasionally depend on evil in order to subsist: I mean that it can get support only from speculators.

Z This goes to show that evil is sometimes not so evil. Or rather, it is good and evil together which help the growth of the new. And evil, perhaps, even more than the good.

Y Notice, too, that evil feeds on good: the art dealers who reject the new profit from the much-maligned new art when it becomes "old."

Z But when we observe that it is these very people who unwittingly endow works of art with material value, we must again call evil good.

Y Evil lives off the good in still another way: think of the critics who live, to some extent, by viciously attacking the new.

Z From which the good profits again, for these attacks, like everything else, help it grow.

But let us go back once again to the subject of destruction of form. In so doing we shall have gradually to leave the different concepts of beauty behind until we have obtained the final concept, wholly purified and interiorized. The evolution of art exhibits a succession of stages from the natural to the abstract. Each of these stages resulted solely from the destruction of prior creations. I spoke before of the Naturalistic, Cubist, and Abstract-Realist conceptions, in their relation to nature. But in the end, the artist can express the beautiful without referring to nature. When he becomes conscious of the universal, in other words, when individuality has lost its preponderant influence, he can, now that he has achieved greater consciousness, directly express plastic beauty, perfect harmony, in short, that which is the goal of art. He has gathered the external world into himself; by this token, the latter is always present in him and is always capable of stirring his emotion.

Y That's true: emotion expresses both inner and outer reality.

Z Yes, it expresses both the individual and the universal. But now the universal has arrived at its maturity: on the aesthetic plane we can even say that the particular phenomena of nature have become *true* in recollection.

Y In fact, art is almost always the expression of recollection.

Z Art strives for plastic harmony between intuitive aesthetic inwardness and recollections of external reality.

Y But is recollection real?

Z What was real a while ago is still so, and you exist now just as much as you did before: is the connection between you and certain things broken merely because you are no longer looking at them, or because you are now looking at other things? Furthermore, isn't one thing as real as another, cannot the *one* endow the recollected image of the *other* with reality? Isn't the capacity to see and conceive the beautiful a permanent part of our natures?

T That is so: this capacity must indeed be very powerful, especially in the artist.

Z But the layman has this capacity too, to some extent. Sometimes he even has it to a very high degree. Why couldn't the layman or the art lover cultivate an aesthetic conception as well as the artist? The same road is open to him; all he lacks is the plastic experience in handling materials: as far as everything else is concerned, he has as much occasion as the artist himself to practice abstraction with respect to all the phenomena of life.

Y That is just what you have shown me this evening. But it is difficult – and the layman is preoccupied with other things. As for you, you are fortunate to be able to live constantly in the beautiful.

Z Relatively fortunate. The artist can be fully satisfied only when his conception of the beautiful is reflected in the world around him. Thus a naturalistic painter can be completely happy in his relation with nature and, more generally, with all natural reality.

But the abstract-realist painter knows a different kind of beauty: one that he creates himself, and that in nature appears only under a veil. To create happiness, harmony is necessary, the harmony of the inner and the outer. Because the new man strives to interiorize the external world, he can be fully happy only after this equilibrium is achieved.

Y Then the man given to external things is not happier?

Z No. He can be fully happy only in and through the natural world. The new man can no longer be happy by following this path, for such happiness is unfree. The happiness of the new man is freer, stronger, more decisive. But his happiness is internal and still lacks its external complement; that is why it is incomplete.

Y And is that the happiness of the abstract-real life of which you spoke just before?

Z Yes, this inner life will create its external complement: abstract-real life will achieve external life, and gradually permeate the whole of the external world. Then the new man will be provided with the external milieu in which to be fully happy.

Y That's true; to interiorize the external world is not easy.

Z If a person happens to have achieved such interiorization, he is at once subjected to external factors operating in a contrary direction. Today, everything is dominated by the most external elements, by material factors. So that only the abstract artist is happier than the layman. It is no doubt difficult to conceive the beautiful in our society, for it is difficult to be concerned with balance in the midst of things which lack it. We shall return to this point. We have to lift ourselves by our own efforts to a conception of the beautiful. Such a conception is by no means a luxury. A feeling for beauty freed from matter could regenerate this materialist society. In present society, it is not only the lay art lover who must think of other things than beauty; the artist himself is forced to do so. You say that it is difficult for the layman to give his whole attention to the beautiful, but in our world the artist too must devote a great deal of his time to material necessities. It is hard for him to conquer this world. It is harder, perhaps, for the artist who has completely broken with old art, as you yourself have noticed.

Y Your studio doesn't really surprise me. Everything here breathes your ideas. Other studios are not at all like this.

Z Most of the other painters are not like me, either. These things go together. Most painters show a preference for unmodern things, they surround themselves with old furnishings, carpets, objects, pictures.

X And they're not wrong to do that: painters seek the beautiful, and these things are beautiful.

Z They are beautiful, no question of that, but they are also old! We have already said quite a bit about that. As for me, I think it is difficult for an artist to strive toward a new conception of the beautiful while he continues to make his house or his studio a kind of museum of old art, most often of mediocre quality. Thus he himself creates an atmosphere in which the new cannot be at ease. And the art lover imitates the artist.

I think that the present-day artist should show preference for the trend of his age in all matters. This studio expresses to some extent the idea of Neo-Plasticism. In a certain way, it shows the equivalence of relations achieved exclusively by the elements of color and line. The shape of the studio favored this effect, for space is articulated here in such a way that abstract relations are stated in its very form. Which is more than we can say of most other studios or apartments. Our Dutch rooms are most often lacking in any kind of architectural taste. They are hardly more than spaces limited by six flat surfaces – with holes for doors and windows. Then these rooms have to be divided by means of the objects the occupant chooses to place or hang there. French rooms, on the whole, have a certain organization: some thought has been given to the woodwork, to the construction of fireplaces or stoves, to the placement of mirrors, the type of floor, etc. All this amounts to some sort of composition, such as we find sometimes in our country too, in the homes of well-to-do people. But the wall surfaces are always undivided, or divided in an unbalanced way.

Y That's true; and how different one room can be from another!

Z The difference is due to the distribution of space and to the use of color. We can see this, for instance, in many of the business districts of France. The various façades divide the street spatially. They are differentiated by means of white, black, or some definite color. Thus they form a composition of various colored planes expressing clear and balanced relations. A certain balance of architectonic and decorative elements also struck me, at times, in our country, for instance, in the farms of Brabant.

Y Then everything depends on the way in which a room space is divided?

Z When a room's proportions are right, it may satisfy us momentarily, but not in the long run. For this is not enough to make it "livable." To meet such a requirement, i. e., to satisfy us continually from the aesthetic point of view, a room should not be an empty space, limited by six empty planes which are merely opposite each other: a room should be a divided space, hence a space already partially filled, limited by six surfaces which are also divided, and which balance each other in their relations of position, dimension, and color. People sensed this vaguely when they divided a room space by means of furnishings and other objects. Even the walls were divided to some extent, if not by their own structure, at least by furnishings, pictures, etc. But all that was done in a more or less arbitrary way by means of objects more or less bizarre or arbitrarily chosen, so that it was a question of decoration rather than of relations and proportions.

Y Agreed.

Z The distribution of the space should not be effected primarily by objects brought into the room from outside: everything should contribute to the harmony. No art should be asked to do another's work. Industrial arts and painting should not replace architecture, and vice versa. They can only complete and deepen the architecture and the latter can only serve as their support. But things were not always thought of in that way: architects designed decorations and furnishings, and painters practiced architecture in the realm of decoration. They tried to express constructive functions by means of decorations, forgetting that this was the architect's task. Thus, the flat surface was decoratively conceived of as

having a limiting function; as a result, the motifs placed along the edges had the effect of enclosing the areas in question. Now the function of architecture is indeed to mark off limits, but the flat surface – at least the flat rectangle – has the plastic meaning of *extension*.

Y Then architecture cannot itself express extension?

Z Its constructive function is to *cover* the space; just the same, it expresses extension in its own fashion by its many partial constructions, and by its constructive organization of the whole.

Y It is now clear to me that decorative painting, expressing itself in accordance with traditional formulas, can never sufficiently emphasize plastic extension.

Z And painting for painting's sake can never be anything but decorative painting. Ultimately, both are one and the same thing; that is why it is perfectly logical, as both are purified, that the one transform itself into the other. Painting, once it is purified, operates with lines and colors alone.

The painting of the past, painting for painting's sake as well as decorative painting, has always more or less veiled the pure plastic elements by form and representation. By representation above all. The plastic ornament is, for instance, purer in certain old Moorish decorations than in the so-called rationalism of our modern epoch of naturalistic decoration and stylization.

Y Are you applying the same ideas of pure plasticism to the contents of this room, the furnishings, the carpet, and everything commonly referred to as the applied arts?

Z Of course I am. Only in this way is unity possible. Formerly, the elements which articulated space were not merely means but things in themselves, objects with individual existences, and separate from the whole. These elements scarcely had any essential relation to the form and color of the room. The room was decorated to suit the objects set in it, or these were chosen to suit the appearance of the room. Thus a certain harmony was achieved, but not an exact expression of balanced relations, because that requires the exact equivalence of the objects in their relations with each other. If the room is not bizarre in form, the furnishings and the ensemble must not be bizarre either.

Y It's clear that the furnishings suit the rectangular form of the room to the degree that they themselves are rectangular.

Z The form and color of a piece of furniture, its general aspect, should be in accord with the general aspect of the room; moreover, the relations of measurement, and the interrelations of color should also suit the room, for otherwise one cannot achieve pure equilibrium. Because of their form, which is usually rectangular, the canvases of naturalistic painters are indeed suitable to the rectangular form of a typical room, provided that we do not look at what is painted inside the frame! It would be preferable to turn the faces of these pictures to the wall, so as to use them merely as elements in the articulations of the wall.

Y So you think that the furnishings and all the objects in a room should be designed primarily to fit the room itself?

Z If you want to achieve in the ordering of the whole an *exact* expression of perfectly balanced relationships, then everything has to be done in accordance with one and the same principle, in this case, the principle of Neo-Plasticism. Then the various branches of art co-operate automatically. Each skill has its own requirements, and needs its own servitors. For each skill requires unqualified devotion to it.

X I'm afraid that if the method of Neo-Plasticism were followed through, the room might be somewhat lacking in intimacy.

Z That would depend on the way the principles were applied, and – on our personality. What one would call “intimate,” would not necessarily be such for another. It even seems difficult to speak of “intimacy” in this connection, especially in view of the sentimental meaning the term often takes on in our language.

X This Neo-Cubist decoration leaves me unsatisfied; though I do like the colors.

Z The word “Neo-Cubist” is not ill-chosen, for Neo-Plasticism is actually a consequence of Cubism. The public already knows Cubism, so “Neo-Cubism” is a fairly good term for indicating the direction people must take to arrive at Neo-Plasticism.

Y Perhaps it is just because I'm a simple art lover that I find the term “Neo-Cubist” easier than “Neo-Plasticism” or “new plasticism.” But I understand that an artist will have a very definite personal conception.

But to go back to our subject, wouldn't you say that this room, by its very structure, contributed in a way to the plastic quality of the color?

Z To a certain degree, yes. The loft, the closet, and the built-in fireplace effect an initial division of space and of surfaces. This architectonic division is continued by the skylight, by the big studio window, and by the subdivision of the latter into smaller surfaces or panes with, into the bargain, the door in the back under the loft. From this constructive division follows the color division of walls, furnishings, and utensils.

Y Everything contributes to make this division perfect, that I see; for instance, the ivory-colored curtains, now drawn.

Z They form a rectangular plane dividing the planes of the wall next to the window. To continue this partition, I added red, gray, and white planes. And the division of the space is also furthered by the white shelves with the gray box and the cylindrical white jar.

Y Even that jar, seen from here, gives the impression of a square surface.

Z The gray tool box in the corner also has its importance.

Y As has no doubt the little orange box of colors, there under the curtain . . .

Z . . . it stands out against the gray and white planes.

Y The effect of the bright ivory is beautiful too.

Z And next to that, note the work table in light gray with, on one side, the jug painted in a flat white, and on the other, the bright red box contrasting with the black and white planes of the wall under the windows. And then, next to the work table, note the varnished black bench against the dark red plane of the wall next to the window.

Y The gray stool goes well with the black bench behind it.

Z We could examine the studio in detail in this way. But I repeat, this is still not unity.

Y But if the wall you face when you work were also treated in this manner, wouldn't the colors disturb you?

Z The easel is placed right in front of the big closet which juts into the studio.

The closet should be painted a neutral color, gray for instance, and then the problem would be solved. But it would be solved still better if we stopped producing easel paintings. If those who agree with me were to plan their interiors in accordance with the principles of Neo-Plasticism, easel painting would gradually disappear. And Neo-Plasticism would have much greater scope in our actual surroundings. It is as difficult to paint a room as to make a painting. It's not enough to set a red, a blue, a yellow, a gray, etc., next to each other. That would be merely decoration. It is necessary to use the right red, the right blue, the right gray – right in themselves, and right with respect to the others. It is all in the *how*: how the elements are placed, how the dimensions are worked out, how the colors of the various elements are interrelated. And the action of the color depends on the structure of the room: the distribution of light plays an important part in the determination of the color.

Y Our rooms are generally much too dark.

Z Yes, they go with a dark age. But the darkness emphasizes the need for light: it is because darkness surrounds us that the darkness within us is dispelled, and the inner light is accentuated. Light must eventually come into our rooms too, and color with it.

Y Could easel painting really disappear in time?

Z The abstract-realist picture will disappear as soon as we can transfer its plastic beauty to the space around us through the organization of the room into color areas.

X And yet we have never been able to do without naturalistic pictures.

Z But the latter are radically different from abstract-realist pictures; while a definite atmosphere, a natural harmony can be created in our apartments and furnishings, *individual sensibility* can be expressed only in naturalistic pictures. And that is why such pictures were formerly indispensable. On the other hand the pure aesthetic plasticism of the universal, the exact plasticism of relations, expressed exclusively by line and color – this art so different from painting according to nature – is gradually turning abstract-realist painting away from easel painting.

Y But can one achieve in a room the same plastic expression as on a canvas? For instance, we encompass all the details of a picture with one glance but not a room.

Z Nevertheless a room, too, can be seen in a single glance, relatively, that is. Remember: our inner vision is different from our sensory perception. We survey the room with our eyes, and afterwards we form an inner image, which causes us to see the various planes as a single plane. Besides, is it so desirable to see the plastic image as a whole? Doesn't the picture remain too much of an "object"? And isn't the three-dimensional unity of various wall surfaces an excellent means of shifting our inner vision, of making us more sensitive to

multiple dimensions? I am of the opinion that the individual factor, which continues to cling, so to speak, to every plastic conception, can be best avoided when the plastic organization of the room replaces the picture.

X But the room is always around us. Is it really desirable constantly to experience the emotion of beauty?

Z You don't get tired looking at a Neo-Plastic picture, let alone at a Neo-Plastic room. In naturalistic pictures, the individual element is the dominant one; that is why they cannot satisfy us all the time. An emotion of beauty in which the individual element is more or less dominant is a temporary emotion. Only the pure plasticism of the universal can satisfy us without tiring us.

Y The pure plasticism of the universal Yes, that also contains the interiorized individual element.

Z Yes, for it contains everything. The pure plasticism of the universal is equilibrium, i.e., a precise expression of the equivalence between the interiorized individual element and the universal. As against naturalistic plasticism in which the individual element is dominant, we can say roughly that Neo-Plasticism is the plasticism of the universal. Thus, this Neo-Plasticism, in which the individual and the universal confront each other in a relation of equivalence, and hence, in repose, can constantly surround us without becoming wearisome. Moreover, Neo-Plasticism has so many aspects that every room could be designed in terms of its special purpose. By the composition of color planes and by their interrelationships, by using more or less color, by the very density of the color, the desired harmony between the room as such and its special function can be obtained.

Y But in such rooms we must imagine a man different from ourselves!

Z A man different from us will one day require such rooms! Yes, everything depends on men. We may be sure that they will not always remain as they generally are today: life, which is real in the material sense will become real in the abstract sense.

Y From what you have just told us, it has become clearer to me why Neo-Plasticism places such emphasis on *balanced relationships*. But the public might say that the "aesthetic plasticism of balanced relationships" is not yet art. Wouldn't it be better to speak, for instance, of "the aesthetic plasticism of the universal"?

Z Truth has more than one facet; we have to throw light on many facets, to express it more completely. The definition you have given is quite good, too, at least if it is properly understood, and it has often been formulated in writings on Neo-Plasticism. But if it is not properly interpreted, one might deduce from this definition that the individual factor was completely left out. But this is impossible in art. The precise plasticism of the universal is inconceivable without the plasticism of pure equilibrium, and equilibrium is inconceivable without duality. For it is the duality which expresses the relation. If only one term is represented, no matter how, the representation will be individualistic. The precise plasticism of the universal is not the representation of one of the two terms; it is the representation of the

balanced relation between the two terms. So that nothing can prevent the aesthetic plasticism of pure equilibrium from containing art too – since it contains everything.

Y Seen that way, the term “balanced relation” seems to me well chosen.

Z And not only for that reason. Neo-Plasticism also wants to emphasize the art phenomenon as such: it is indeed the universal that we want to express, but the phenomenon, or the appearance, is the balanced relation of two opposed elements. In these days when the absolutely new is emerging, it is first of all necessary to emphasize the appearance because it is the appearance, the art phenomenon, that will tell us whether a work actually expresses a pure plasticism of the universal. “Execution” is to art what action is to life. On the phenomenal level, i. e., in Neo-Plastic appearance, the most external means of expression – form and natural color – are interiorized, and thus rendered equivalent to the pure plastic means of inwardness. These – rectangular color planes – are pure with respect to each other: thus it is that in Neo-Plasticism we speak of *balanced relations*, in contrast to former painting, which expressed *harmony*.

X But isn't harmony also an equilibrium of relations?

Z Natural harmony, the old kind of harmony, does not imply the notion of a pure equilibrium of relations. It implies a relative equilibrium. In it, the typical “repetition” of nature is dominant; it expresses an opposition, that is true, but not a permanent synthesis of the two terms. This is precisely why Neo-Plasticism opposes the *old harmony*. The difficult task of the new artist is to bring the new *harmony* into being.

Y That's why I don't believe that Neo-Plastic composition can be executed by anyone but the painter himself.

Z Doesn't the architect produce art, while making use of other persons who are not artists?

Y Yes, but architecture is different from painting.

Z The more painting will appear as “the new architectonic plasticism of color,” the more will it be united to architecture.

X But then we shall be deprived of an art!

Z The time will come when we will be able to dispense with all the arts as we know them today; then ripened beauty will be tangible reality. And humanity will lose nothing by this. Architecture will have to change least of all, precisely because it is so different from painting. In architecture, the work is done and the material brought together by people who are not artists. Couldn't that also happen in painting?

Y But color is something so special.

Z Just as stone, iron, and wood must be placed in the architectural structure, so color planes could be placed in the picture – if these planes existed!

Y But doesn't that amount to the same thing? As soon as color is mechanically applied or a layman is allowed to handle it, it will become something quite different.

Z It is precisely to make it something different that Neo-Plasticism is looking for a different technique and a different method of work. Even abstract-realist painting

requires a new technique; a new plasticism of color in architecture will require it all the more. But when you say that color will be "different," you mean that it will be "less right"; and here I don't agree with you. For the beauty which the new plasticism of color will achieve will also be quite different.

X It will certainly be colder!

Z Colder for those whose feelings are individual, but more intense for those whose feelings are universal. Since in the application to architecture of the new plasticism of color, the technique, the execution, and the materials play a great role, it is difficult at the present time to give an exact idea of the new beauty, for the technique and the materials are still far from perfect. The kind of execution required in Neo-Plasticism – i. e., execution with the help of specialized technicians and machines – will be *different* from the direct execution by the artist himself, but superior to it and also more in accord with the painter's intentions. At present, the execution usually doesn't live up to the painter's intention. For the artist always finds it difficult to be the pure instrument of intuition, I mean of the universal in him. He cannot but tire in occupying himself with questions of technique and execution, and as a result his vision of the universal is more or less weakened.

X But isn't the hand of the artist everything?

Z You are thinking in terms of the old art, in which the hand of the artist was, in fact, everything – precisely because in the old art, the individual element plays such an important part. In the old art, the universal remains under a veil. The new art requires a new technique: exact plasticism requires means that are exact. And what is more exact than a machine-made material? The new art needs skillful technicians. Everywhere new inventions appear: we have colored concrete and colored bricks, we still have nothing that Neo-Plasticism can use. Until the proper materials exist, the new plasticism of color when applied to architecture will have to be executed by workers, by means of "painting" as we have known it.

Y But won't the result be quite different from painting, even if the right colors are used? Isn't the copy of a painting, or any other art object, always different from the original?

Z Here the difference is due to the differences in technique, and to the individual factors. Past works of art were sometimes produced by a technique we do not know, and sometimes the materials used have undergone alterations. Nevertheless, it is not easy to distinguish a good copy from the original – many dealers have profited by this! Moreover, as I said before, the Neo-Plastic artist wants the result to be "a bit different" from what he himself does!

Y Would it be easier to copy a painting expressing the universal in a definite way, and no longer dominated by the individual factor?

Z It would be quite as difficult; but the copy might be more successful; precisely because everything can be better controlled.

Y But that should make it even more difficult.

Z At all events, a copy of a naturalistic painting will more readily resemble "something."

X But with this new method of work, the *personal* factor characterizing a work of art will obviously have to disappear.

Z Which is exactly one reason why Neo-Plasticism can appear as a "style."

In the great epochs of style, the "person" disappeared: the general thought of the age was the force guiding artistic expression. The same holds true today. More and more, the work will speak for itself: the personality changes its place, that is to say, each work of art becomes a personality instead of the artist. Each work of art becomes a different expression of the one.

X In former times, works were also executed by laymen; aren't they filled with the spirit of their age just as much as the artists?

Z It is hard to prove or to imagine that the feeling for beauty was alive in all.

But I doubt that the slaves of Egypt, who toiled at the pyramids, were strongly permeated by the spirit of their age. Nevertheless works of art were then created which seem to me greater than those of the Middle Ages, although medieval man was somewhat more conscious of the spirit of his time.

Y As soon as a man is more conscious of the spirit of his age, his personality comes to the fore.

Z Correct; and then the spirit of the age is quickly lost in the individual – that is, until it has become completely mature in him, for then it takes on universality again, and the personal factor is relegated to the background.

In Neo-Plasticism, the personal factor is becoming more and more superfluous. The more Neo-Plastic painting becomes reality, that is to say, the more Neo-Plasticism becomes part of architecture, the more will the individual personality be relegated to the background.

X Will painting then have anything in common with what we now call "decorative art?"

Z In technique only; in its real being, and in its expression, it will not be an ornamental art. Such an art fills, covers, decorates: the new plasticism of color as applied to architecture is beauty as a living reality.

Y You call on the machine, on the worker, and on the technician; but I suppose that you only think of them as *means*?

Z Certainly. The artist must dominate everything to arrive at the *highest beauty*. But this does not mean that a man cannot produce beauty unless he is an artist: he has only to allow himself to be guided by the elementary laws, for instance, those of equilibrium, necessity, and utility.

Y But isn't that the kind of beauty nature itself gives us?

Z That depends on the type of beauty produced; a rustic hut is close to nature, the work of a modern engineer is not. An engineer is to a certain degree forced to express relations of balance.

Y That's true: such things can be beautiful without being touched by any artist's hand.

Z You see that the hand of the artist is not absolutely indispensable.

Y But take music: there are the instruments, to be sure; yet the artist has to do everything himself!

Z That is true, once again, but only true for old music: the new music requires something else. The closer music comes to a pure expression of balanced relations, the more will it feel the limitations of existing instruments. Then other instruments will be sought – or machines!

Y And will the purpose be to eliminate the individual factor, as in painting?

Z Rather to overcome the domination of the individual factor. A concert performer must strain all his spiritual energy to play properly. Wouldn't it be marvelous to discover a machine to which the composer, the true artist, could confide all the physical part of his work?

X But as I see it, something would still be lacking. Take for instance a violin. The best new violin will not have the sound of an old violin which has been long in use.

Z What you say holds, perhaps, for the old music. I don't know too much about violins or old music; I prefer jazz. That broke up the old harmony. And that, at least, was a beginning. Besides, the new concert music is doing the same thing in a different way.

Y Since I feel that the new beauty is quite different from the beauty we have known until now, I will assume that other methods of work have become necessary. But – seeing is not everything; many things are accessible to us through feeling. May it not be the case that the visible affects us in ways that are invisible? What I have in mind is the new scientific hypothesis, a theory of the ether, according to which matter, through human touch, undergoes a permanent change, depending on the inner state of the agent. According to this hypothesis, it would not at all be the same thing for the artist to discharge his feeling of the beautiful on the canvas or wall, as for a worker to splash color there without thinking further.

Z The problem is: can we see the change matter is supposed to undergo? The occultists even claim that something of the agent's spiritual sphere remains attached to the object. If that is the case, then the strange sensation we feel in museums of old art might be accounted for by a kind of conflict between the old and the new spheres of spirit. However that may be, the inner and the outer are closely connected; the appearance of things is itself a kind of energy. But man confronting this energy and this appearance, is himself an energy. It is very possible that these energies perceive each other, but of this we cannot be certain.

Wouldn't it be better to confine ourselves to what is certain? Our senses are made for the physical world, not for the ether or for the astral sphere. Let us stick to the external appearance, at least as long as we do not have sharper senses, or new senses. What we cannot perceive is a matter for scientific knowledge or for feeling. Our knowledge of higher things can only be relative. As for individual sensibility, only physical sensibility is common to all men and clearly definable. But when universal sensibility can be clearly defined, it will transcend every other sort; it manifests itself only when particular and individual feelings are silenced. This is why these are excluded by the new art.

X Then you don't exclude sensibility as such?

Z Sensibility changes; we need a different sensibility, just as beauty today is a different beauty.

Y Our habitual impressions are uncertain, that I admit.

Z Life provides only two means by which we can achieve a pure vision of things: action and plastic appearance. We can call the appearance of pure plasticism, silent action or the silent appearance of equilibrium externalized. It contains everything, and everything originates in it; and yet it is motionless. It is a movement of pure balanced relations which plastically expresses repose. In real life, action and plastic appearance are most often veiled and confused. The great task of the new age is to make them both appear clearly. Thus truth is revealed. Truth is the principle of the new age, just as love was of the previous one. First, love casts a veil, now, love is itself veiled – by truth. Love by growing has become truth.

Y Yes, everything changes – but essentially remains the same.

Z That is the great revolution, that is why former times are opposed to the new, and vice versa: the past, in its own way, strives for love; it doesn't strive for truth. And so long as the past is the stronger, the new is gaining ground slowly, bit by bit.

Y Since for us the true is what we can perceive, I see the importance of the plastic appearance of things.

Z The purer our vision of the true, the more the external is eliminated, and the more we are enabled to see and to create the abstract.

Y Now I can really see the "abstract" in this room. I have a sensation of being surrounded by flowers, or rather, I feel the presence of a beauty such as flowers evoke, and I feel this even more strongly than when I am actually seeing flowers! And this is due entirely to these color planes, or, to speak your language, to these color bodies. That red box over there has the same effect on me as poppies in the sun. I can now look upon Neo-Plasticism as a consequence of naturalistic painting which, after all, has been developing in the direction of condensation and simplification. I am thinking of Van Dongen's flowers: they are nothing but circles of color.

Z But the abstract beauty you respond to here, is the beauty of *all* things. You were thinking of flowers, and I grant you that we have here the beauty of flowers too, but this is a deeper beauty. Natural flowers are for children, and for the feminine element of life. It is in flowers that external, feminine beauty, manifests itself most effectively. But in this studio the feminine is plastically expressed in an *interiorized* form, so that it is equivalent to the plastic expression of the masculine element, which is also interiorized and appears with it. Now this duality of equivalents forms a real unity. That is why the emotion of beauty that has taken hold of you is so powerful. Color, interiorized, is pure . . . And no doubt that is why you thought about flowers. But every natural color is pure when interiorized, just as every interiorized line is straight, and every interiorized form is flat.

Y That way of seeing makes everything more beautiful – everything is filled with joy!

Z When beauty is interiorized one can no longer speak of joy. Joy is only one part of life's dualism, which includes joy and grief; these are plastically expressed as extension and limitation. In interiorized beauty, joy and grief confront each other as equivalents, so that the specific characteristics of joy and grief are eliminated, and repose is created. Beauty, freed from the tragic which dominated it, now seems to us deeper, and we yield to it with a feeling of freedom which is, indeed, joy. There you are right.

Y And the domination of the tragic ends when the form is destroyed?

Z Form, being limited, prevents expansion: this is the very definition of the tragic. If limitation did not exist, the tragic would disappear with it, and by the same token all subjective appearance of reality. This is why limitation can never be entirely abolished in plastic art; but we can overcome its dominance. Limitation must be interiorized: form must be achieved by means of the flat surface and the straight line.

Y What about expansion?

Z The formal expression of expansion is most often vague as against the definite clarity of limitation. That is why limitation is dominant. Expansion, the plastic manifestation of vital force, must be brought from vagueness to definiteness; then it can act plastically, for then it can be opposed to interiorized limitation, as its equivalent.

Y Neo-Plasticism is thus the plastic art of interiorized limitation, and of expansion rendered definite?

Z Yes. And I already told you that this means a plastic art of the straight line and of the flat surface: expansion and limitation can be expressed as equivalents only by the straight line. These two extremes are plastically expressed when the difference of position is pushed to its limit, i. e., by the right angle.

Y And how are expansion and limitation expressed in color?

Z By the interrelationship of colors, but also by color as such. As the line must be *open, straight*, to express expansion in definite and exact terms, so color to achieve the same expression must be *open, pure, bright*. For then it radiates vital force; if it is closed and confused, it obstructs the vital force, and expresses the dominance of limitation, that is to say, the tragic. Neo-Plasticism, by its technique, and especially by its concentration on the flat surface, is able to reach, even in color, the balanced expression "of the one and the other."

Y So what you say about line and color are general truths – it's a strange thing that they are not generally recognized as truths!

Z That is due to subjective vision. The manner in which we see line and color, expansion and limitation, depends on the character and development of our own vital force. The appearance we judge "true" is dependent on all that.

Y And is it also in conformity with this attitude that we create the atmosphere of our life!

Z Certainly. Our surroundings must be in accord with our inner, vital force if we are to live in harmony. On the plane of art: whatever surrounds us ought to be of such a character as to interpret adequately the vital force in us. For the man of aesthetic sensibility

it is just as important to arrange his house or room according to his own inner dispositions, a to eat and drink, since for such a man the aesthetic element is the equivalent of the material element.

In present-day society, men think only of the natural element, while creating the contrary impression.

Y True! Everything revolves around the physical.

X But how could it be otherwise? Isn't the physical a primary necessity?

Z Yes indeed, and that is just why man should be provided with material things; he should not have to devote his whole mind to them. If material things were less difficult to obtain, they would lose their enormous weight of themselves. In the new society, the material factor must be automatically at our disposal – and even then it will have sufficient weight to balance our spiritual and human needs!

Y How can we achieve this?

Z First of all we must have the strength to keep from regarding the material factor as the most important one. But that requires the spirit of self-sacrifice. We should begin by giving ourselves to an ideal: for the present, the new society exists only to the degree that we desire it. We ought to begin by forming an image of what that society must one day accomplish in all fields. For instance, in what I said, I confined myself to the interiors of our homes, but the exterior is no less important.

Y What lies outside our homes is even more difficult to change than the interiors, it is even further from our reach!

Z That is why we shall have to wait a long time before the "new" finds expression in our streets and in our cities. But this state of affairs is not necessarily tragic. It is certainly true that it is harder to use or preserve color outdoors – and it is true, too, that the horizontal tends to be dominant in the street – but even so, a better equivalence of the material aesthetic factors could give a very different aspect and meaning to the city in a future society.

X But take a city that represents an old culture, like Paris – how beautiful it is, how distinguished is the gray tint of the ensemble!

Z Very beautiful. A mature culture has a deep and distinguished beauty, no doubt of it. But should our minds pause before the beauty of even a mature culture? And hasn't the very one we are speaking of paved the way for the new? Is the image of the new in us in nature, as is the new which appears outside? No, man and nature are no longer so united. Just look at the city; isn't it in the city that man has constantly found new force? And do not pecuniary difficulties exclusively account for the fact that our cities do not contain even more new elements?

A mature culture is beautiful in its perfection, but perfection is followed by death and annihilation. To stop the process of annihilation is thus a crime against perfection itself, and means that the old has taken the place rightly belonging to the new, that is to say, to a higher perfection.

X You talk like Brugman; still, I wonder why the mature culture that we see plastically expressed in our great cities should disappear.

Z It is the ripened culture of a form that is about to die. This culture is visible everywhere in all its beauty, but on the other hand it everywhere obstructs the path of that to which it has given birth, I mean, the bright and balanced plastic art of limitation and expansion considered as equivalents – i.e., the artistic expression of the new stage which vital human force has reached. At this stage, the city should be a plastic manifestation of the equivalence between the natural and the non-natural elements contained in this new force. But this cannot be achieved by dividing the city into streets and parks, by filling it with houses, trees of every kind, plants – no, the streets, that is to say, the clusters of houses, should express in themselves the equivalence of interiorized nature and mind externalized.

X But only your man of the future will need that sort of thing!

Z True, and this is why our cities are still not like that!

X You are very radical!

Z Once again: if man tries to adjust his surroundings to the vital force in him and if this vital force is spiritualized, he will necessarily tend toward renewal. And if the duality in this vital force reaches a higher degree of equilibrium, then equilibrium alone will be its expression. If finally the new man recreates nature in terms of what he has become himself – nature and non-nature as a balance of equivalents – then man shall have reconquered – and for you, too – paradise on earth!

Y This evokes in my mind a vision of joy.

Z Paradise never makes us think of anything but joy. But what I have just said can actually be achieved up to a certain point; don't think of it as a Utopia! The city of children will one day be a city of adults: all we have to do is wait for the children to grow up.

Y If the individual becomes the universal by growing, then what you say is logical. I recall now that one of your friends who seemed to understand Neo-Plasticism quite well, told me, one day, that when he looks at a Neo-Plastic work, he feels a yearning for the universal, the nostalgia of his deepest self.

Z That shows what Neo-Plasticism is. Its purpose is to awaken deepest interiority, which is to say, the universal, and not only to stir it powerfully but also to express it with precision. For it is "the universal expressed with precision" that is the cause of such a reflex of *nostalgia*. Most men have only a vague idea of the universal, because the universal in them is vague, too. They do not recognize it in its purely plastic manifestation, because the universal has not become part of their consciousness. But as soon as a definite image of the universal is formed in us, we recognize it in a precise, plastic art. Thus you see that the spirit of the age, in which the universal arrives at clear expression, really manifests itself, if only in a few men. The sign of the new age is that the universal is becoming so conscious in us that we strongly desire to see it expressed purely! So it is indeed true that we feel a yearning for the universal! This yearning should give rise to a completely new art.

Y It's easy to see the need for a new plastic art in a new age. But I should like to go back once more to the subject we touched on a while ago. In daily life it is really very difficult to achieve harmony between ourselves and our surroundings.

Z Yes, we do not often see Neo-Plasticism expressed in architecture, but all the same I should prefer it to any easel painting, even to one made in conformity with the principles of Neo-Plasticism.

Y You said that in architecture Neo-Plasticism is more alive.

Z Yes, we already spoke of that. But there is this too: our plastic idea when applied to architecture has always an exact and equal effect; and it does not matter in what part of the room we place ourselves. A picture is effective only from a certain perspective. A Neo-Plastic canvas will appear stranger than any other when one does not view it from the requisite distance; since the plasticism of relations is rigorously exact, the canvas must in turn, be exactly situated in relation to the room, if, that is, we are ready to pay any attention to the room.

Once again, the picture always retains within it some individual elements; in short, it is there just for one person at a time. Now the room can be there for several persons at once: decorative art, as Neo-Plasticism understands it, should be *for* and *in* society.

Y Of what kind of society could it be the expression? I have heard Neo-Plasticism called "a typical product of the dying bourgeoisie."

Z Now that is quite surprising! There is nothing in Neo-Plasticism that in the slightest way suggests the bourgeoisie. Isn't the bourgeois characterized by the predominance of individualism, and by close attachment to material things?

X Just because he is attached to material things the bourgeois desires an art of traditional forms.

Y And what about the aristocracy?

Z The same is true of the aristocracy, because most often it has only a material culture. In some rare instances an aristocracy transcends individualism by the maturity of its material culture; then the aristocracy can become "an aristocracy of mind."

But the aristocracy usually goes no further than to the refinements of material life, and hence remains tied to refined, traditional art forms.

Y And what about the worker? Could we expect a new art to emerge from manual labor?

Z No, that was possible in the past, for example, in the Middle Ages. Today, work in the factory is and should be for the masses. This work, this production, is directed by intellectuals or artists, and it is from these that we should expect the new art. The worker is too much like a machine, and like the bourgeois and the aristocrat, is too concerned with material factors. It is from the new man, a synthesis of the worker, the bourgeois, and the aristocrat, *but very different from them*, that Neo-Plasticism must come; after all, it is for the new man that it exists. He alone will be able to give concrete existence to the spirit of the new age both in society and in art.

X All the same I cannot yet understand how you can speak of experiencing beauty in the real world, you who spoke only of abstract life.

Z I said that abstract-real life merely paves the way for the transformation of social life, including the appearances of things around us.

X Yes, that I understand. What bothers me is this: does the inner man attach so much importance to external things? Doesn't he prefer to live in out-of-the-way, somewhat dark places?

Z The new man is much more inward than you imagine, he is also characterized by *interiorized externality*. And the other side of his nature, I mean the more conscious inwardness, will drive him to seek a clearer and more precise expression of it in external things. The new man will be characterized by the total attention he will give to all external things. He will know no rest until these things become a pure expression of both the inner and outer.

X But why are there so many people who possess such inwardness and yet do not feel the need you speak of?

Z What I said holds only for the new man who has learned to see plastically, that is to say, for the new man at his best. Not to feel this need is to be incomplete, one-sided. To be complete is to be entirely true. This implies that the inner and outer are perfectly equivalent, and thus form a unity. Then the outer is an image of the inner – and both are reflected together in all external reality. This is why I doubt the spirituality of those who still surround themselves with tortuous forms, love to live with them, and want art to be just as tortuous.

X Your "new age" is beginning to annoy me: it requires that we pay attention to everything! And for all its inwardness, the new age is very external!

Z To understand and endorse this "new age," one's vision must be pure, it comes down to that. As to the spirit, I shall say that artistic expression will give a clear image of the evolutionary stage reached by the new man. It is artistic expression that reveals the degree of inwardness. It shows that the expression of interiority and exteriority as equivalents marks a stage of greater balance – and what are we striving for but balance? Past ages and past art tried to achieve balance by means of form. But isn't form even more external? No wonder that the torment of the artists of the past was caused solely by the impossibility of rendering inwardness in terms of pure form.

X Is that what they really wanted to do?

Z Unconsciously, yes; intuition, which is the source of art, always sought this.

Y If so, the artist who does not express himself in traditional forms will suffer less.

Z Less, but he'll suffer just the same, for he, too, must create in terms of external form, even though this form is interiorized and nontraditional. The suffering of the artist goes on because the external remains for him, too, no matter how much he may interiorize it. He suffers because he must always remain a part of the whole. Again, he suffers because in art, as in society, the mass of people lag behind him: he is compelled to live surrounded by an art that is not of his time, he is forced to share in the injustices of present society. Suffering continues, because even in Neo-Plasticism the universal cannot achieve an absolutely pure expression. Suffering also continues because so many things have not yet

been realized in the new. Just the same, this suffering is diminished to the degree that a balance between the inner and the outer is achieved, to the degree that man becomes more complete. The vital force manifests itself ever more purely, more profoundly, more freely.

Y Yes, we should strive for a balance between the inner and the outer. We have the regrettable tendency of considering everything in terms of the external; and it is the latter that controls our sense of vitality!

Z Or conversely, in terms of the inner alone! For that is quite as dangerous so long as we are not complete beings.

Y When we consider everything in terms of the utmost externality, then the most powerful representation of the external, as it appears to us, impresses us as being the most powerful representation of the vital force.

Z And when we conceive of vital force in terms of our inner states, then we are likely to represent it most falsely – precisely in the most external terms.

Y Hence our inwardness and our externality must become one, if we want to recognize our vital force in its purest expression.

Z Luckily, even before such unity can be achieved, the man of today, despite his imperfection, is able to recognize what is most perfect in the spirit of the age. Thus it is that Neo-Plasticism, despite all our failings, has reached a point of plastic expression that represents the new spirit in art.

Y The mass does not see in Neo-Plasticism a pure expression of vital force. I have heard it called an "art of the sanitarium," and things like that.

Z Those who talk that way are right from their own point of view. Can we become angry with children who do not understand the way adults express their vital force?

Y The character of vital force in the new man differs greatly from that in the old.

Z The vital force of the new man should be called *conscious radiation of the universal*. Usually it is expressed in wisdom rather than in joy; but it is also everything in one. In art it appears as the plastic aesthetics of equilibrium, we could even call it the plastic art of repose. And this implies richness and simplicity, and many other things.

Y The new age and the old are absolutely different, though one grew out of the other.

Z Yes, by evolution and by mutation. This is quite clear: externally, evolution paves the way for new forms, nevertheless the new appears suddenly, by mutation, as something radically different.

Y We can also clearly distinguish the old man from the new: the two live in different atmospheres.

Z Likewise, we distinguish the past from the present age, particularly if we keep in mind that the past age was characterized by the search for and will to the tragic. In art, too, the former age strove for the tragic element, for lyricism, for feeling. With these it felt at ease.

- Y** And these things have their source in nature's domination?
- Z** Yes, and it is interesting to note that the past age opposes itself more and more clearly to the new, as the latter emancipates itself from these elements. This can be seen in the fact that resistance to Neo-Plasticism increases as it shakes off every vestige of the tragic, of lyricism, and of feeling.
- Y** The new age has gone beyond these things!
- Z** Because the individual has matured and become universal: the new man can only live in the atmosphere of the universal.
- Y** And in that atmosphere the man of former times freezes, so to speak. He does not feel at home in it.
- Z** Here we see the radical difference between the past age and the new. The latter marks a higher stage reached by the same vital force.
- Y** I see that the plastic expression of our vital force, in other words, art, must constantly be transformed.
- Z** Everything changes by growth. Man, by growing, transcends and goes beyond nature; thus the expression of his vital force changes. He followed nature as long as the natural was dominant in the spirit of the age; but with the maturation of the natural in him, the naturalistic representation of vital energy could no longer satisfy him. At that moment his human consciousness, more complete, already contained a new interpretation.

Note

Mondrian makes very frequent use of the term "tragic." As is clear from the context, this term signifies every kind of fear of life, including the dread of the new, and sentimental attachment to the past. In short, the word serves to denote everything that is opposed to Neo-Plasticism.

Classified Catalogue

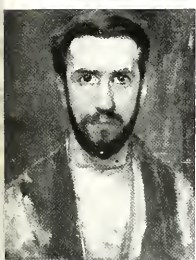
The purpose of this catalogue is to enable the reader to survey the development of Mondrian's style in the treatment of a given theme. The works have been grouped according to subject matter or artistic conception, and arranged in the chronological order within each group.

The publisher wishes to thank Dr. Georg Schmidt of Basel for his most valuable assistance in establishing this catalogue.

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elbstbildnis
Portrait du peintre par lui-même



2 Self-Portrait (c. 1908)
Selbstbildnis
Portrait du peintre par lui-même



3 Self-Portrait (c. 1910)
Selbstbildnis
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Self-Portrait (1911)
elbstbildnis
Portrait du peintre par lui-même



5 Self-Portrait (c. 1911)
Selbstbildnis
Portrait du peintre par lui-même



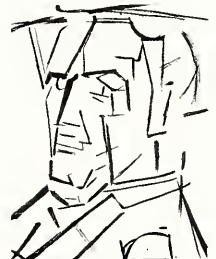
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Sketch for a Self-Portrait (c. 1918)
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8 Self-Portrait (1918)
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9 Self-Portrait (1942)
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10 Portrait of a Woman (c. 1902)
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14 Praying Child (c. 1908)
Betendes Kind
Enfant en prière



15 Zeeland Farmer (c. 1908)
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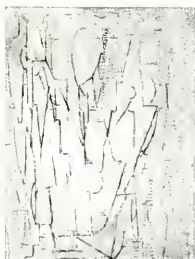
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32 Puppy (1899)
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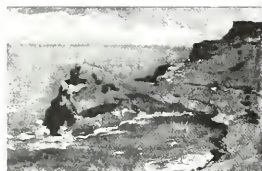


33 Still Life with Gingerpot, I (1912)
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34 Still Life with Gingerpot, II (1912)
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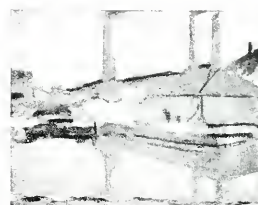
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41 Landscape near Amsterdam (c. 1902)
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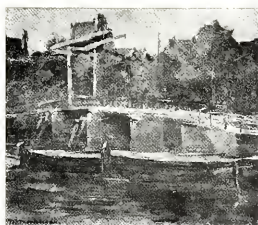
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52 Landscape (before/variant 1908)
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Landscape near Oele (before/variant 1908)
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54 The Banks of the Seine (c.1912)
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55 Landscape (c.1912)
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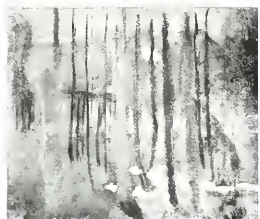
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57 Isolated Tree (c. 1900-05)
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59 Woods (c. 1904)
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60 Woods (c. 1903-05)
Waldlandschaft
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61 Woods (c. 1903-05)
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62 Trees (c. 1906)
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63 Trees (before/var/avant 1908)
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64 Woods near Oele (before/var/avant 1907)
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65 Woods near Oele (1907)
Wald bei Oele
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66 Trees by the River Gein
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Arbres au bord du Gein



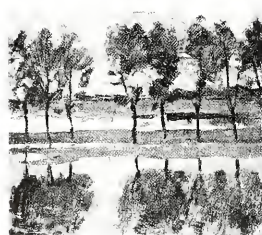
67 Landscape with Trees (c. 1912)
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69 Landscape (Study) (c. 1902)
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70 Trees by the River Gein (c. 1902)
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71 The River Gein: Trees at Moonrise
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Am Gein: Bäume bei aufgehendem Mond
(Skizze)
Près du Gein: Arbres avec lune montante
(ébauche)



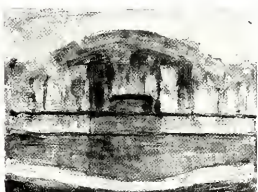
72 The River Gein: Trees at Moonrise
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Am Gein: Bäume bei aufgehendem Mond
Près du Gein: Arbres avec lune montante



73 The River Amstel (c. 1905)
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74 By the River (1907)
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75 The River Amstel in the Evening (c. 1907)
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76 Landscape with Cows Grazing
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79 The River Gein: Willows (c. 1903)
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84 Willow (c. 1904)
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85 Cows by Water (c. 1890)
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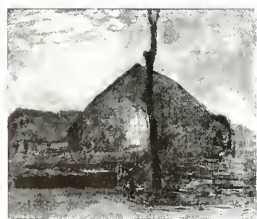


86 Cows Grazing (c. 1902)
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87 Cows (Sketch) (c. 1902)
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89 Farm and Farmer's Wife (c. 1900-05)
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93 Farmer's Wife with Child in Front of a
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94 Farm at Nistelrade (c.1904)
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95 Evening Landscape (c.1904)
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96 Night Landscape (c.1904)
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97 Cottage (c.1905)
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98 Isolated Farmhouse (c.1905-08)
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99 Sheepfold in the Evening (1907)
Schafstall am Abend
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100 Isolated Farm (1907)
Einsames Gehöft
Ferme isolée



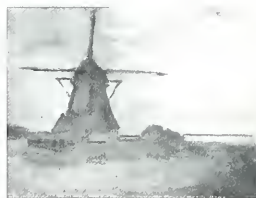
101 Farmhouse with Poultry Yard (before
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102 Mill an River (c.1900)
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103 Mill (c.1900)
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104 The River Gein: Mill in Moonlight
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Près du Gein: Moulin au clair lune



105 Mill by the Water (c.1900)
Mühle am Wasser
Moulin au bord de l'eau



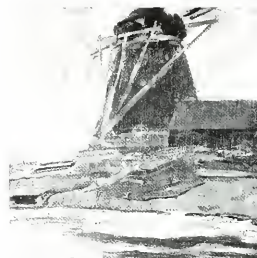
106 Mill by the Water (c.1902)
Mühle am Wasser
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107 Mill by the Lake (c.1903-05)
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108 Mill by the Water (c.1905)
Mühle am Wasser
Moulin au bord de l'eau



109 Windmill (c.1905)
Windmühle
Moulin à vent



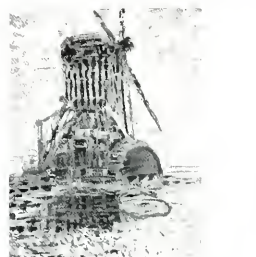
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111 Mill near Domburg (1909)
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112 Mill near Domburg (c.1910)
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115 Farm near Duivendrecht (before/var
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116 Farm near Duivendrecht (before/var
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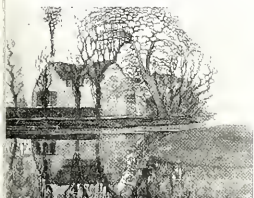
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119 Farm near Duivendrecht (before/var
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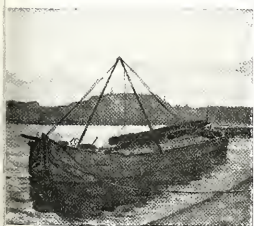
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121 Farm near Duivendrecht (before/var
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122 Farm near Duivendrecht (before/var
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123 Barge on the Amstel: Evening
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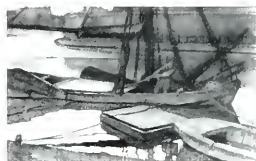
124 Landscape with Boat (c.1895)
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125 Landing Pier (c.1900)
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Barques au repos



126 Dredge in the Evening (c. 1905)
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127 Departure of Fishing Fleet ("Zuidersee") (c. 1908)
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128 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906-08)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



129 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906-08)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



130 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



131 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



132 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



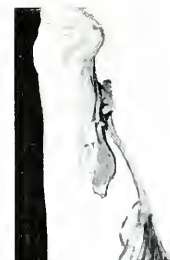
133 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906)
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134 Chrysanthemum (c. 1906)
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135 Dying Chrysanthemum (Sketch) (c. 1907)
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136 Dying Chrysanthemum (c. 1907-08)
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137 Chrysanthemum (c. 1907)
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138 Chrysanthemum (c. 1908-09)
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139 Chrysanthemums (c. 1908-10)
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140 Chrysanthemum (c. 1908)
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141 Chrysanthemum (c. 1908)
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142 Chrysanthemum (c. 1908)
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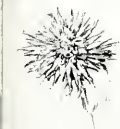
143 Chrysanthemum (c. 1908)
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144 Chrysanthemum (1908)
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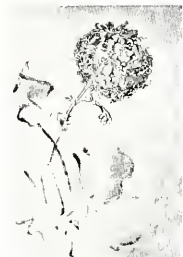
145 Chrysanthemum (1908)
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Chrysanthème



146 Chrysanthemum (1908)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



147 Chrysanthemum (1908)
Chrysanthème
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148 Chrysanthemum (c. 1910)
Chrysanthème
Chrysanthème



149 Flowers (Study) (c. 1900)
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Fleurs (Etude)



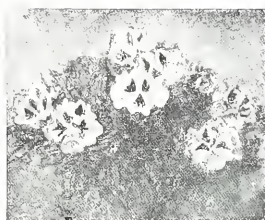
150 Two Marigolds (c. 1907-08)
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151 Two Marigolds (1907)
Zwei Ringelblumen
Deux soucis



152 Red Dahlia (1907)
Rote Dahlie
Dahlia rouge



153 Rhododendron (c. 1910)



154 Rose (c. 1910)



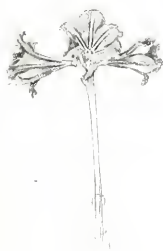
155 Dying Sunflower (c. 1907-08)
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156 Sunflower (c. 1910)
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157 Amaryllis (c. 1907)



158 Amaryllis (1907)



159 Flowering (c. 1907-10)
Blütenstand
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160 Flowering (c. 1907-10)
Blütenstand
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161 Flowering (c.1907-10)
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162 Calla Lily (c.1910)
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163 Calla Lily (c.1910)
Aronstab
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164 Calla Lilies (1910)
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165 Calla Lily (1916)
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166 Hayricks (c.1908)
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167 Hayricks (1908)
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168 Hayricks (c.1909)
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169 Tree (1909-10)
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170 Tree (c.1909-10)
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171 The Red Tree (1909-10)
Der rote Baum
L'arbre rouge



172 Tree (1909-10)
Baum
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173 Tree (1909-10)
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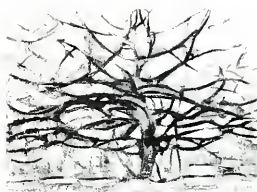
174 The Blue Tree (1909-10)
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175 Tree (1910-11)
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176 Tree (c.1911)
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177 The Gray Tree (1911)
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178 Flowering Trees (1912)
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179 Flowering Apple tree (c.1912)
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180 Tree (c.1910)
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181 Trees (c.1910)
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182 Trees (Sketch) (c.1911)
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83 Tree (Sketch) (c. 1911)
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184 Trees (c. 1911)
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86 Trees (c. 1911)
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Arbres



187 Tree (Sketch) (c. 1911)
Baum (Skizze)
Arbre (Esquisse)



188 Tree (c. 1911)
Baum
Arbre



89 Tree (1911)
Baum
Arbre



190 Oval Composition (Tree) (1912-13)
Ovalbild auf rechteckigem Grund (Baum)
Composition ovale (Arbre)



191 Apple tree (c. 1912)
Apfelbaum
Pommier



92 Tree (c. 1912)
Baum
Arbre



193 Composition No. 1 (Trees) (c. 1912)
Komposition Nr. 1 (Bäume)
Composition No. 1 (Arbres)



194 Composition No. 3 (Trees) (c. 1912)
Komposition Nr. 3 (Bäume)
Composition No. 3 (Arbres)



195 Composition with Trees (c. 1912)
Komposition mit Bäumen
Composition avec arbres



196 Tree (1912)
Baum
Arbre



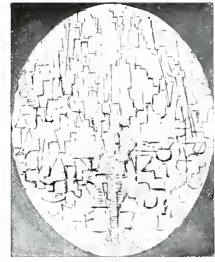
197 Composition in Gray-Blue (c. 1912)
Komposition in Grau-Blau
Composition en gris-bleu



198 Composition with Trees (c. 1912)
Komposition mit Bäumen
Composition avec arbres



199 Oval Composition (Sketch) (c. 1912)
Komposition in Oval (Skizze)
Composition ovale (Esquisse)



200 Oval Composition (Trees) (1913)
Komposition in Oval (Bäume)
Composition ovale (Arbres)

18



201 Eucalyptus (c. 1910)



202 Eucalyptus (1910)



203 Eucalyptus (c. 1912)

19



204 Dunes and Sea (1908)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



205 Dunes and Sea (c. 1909)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



206 Dunes and Sea (1909)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



207 Dunes and Sea (c.1909)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



208 Beach near Domburg (c.1910)
Strand bei Domburg
La plage à Domburg



209 Dunes and Sea (c.1909)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



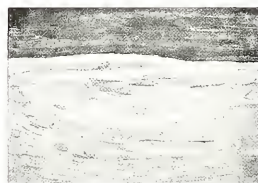
210 Dunes and Sea (c.1909-10)
Dünen und Meer
Dunes et mer



211 Dunes (c.1909)
Dünen
Dunes



212 Dune (c.1910)
Düne
Dune



213 Beach near Domburg (c.1907-10)
Strand bei Domburg
La plage à Domburg



214 Dune (c.1910)
Düne
Dune



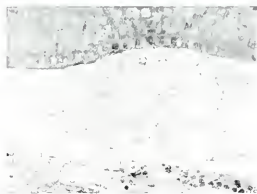
215 Dune (c.1910)
Düne
Dune



216 Dune (c.1910)
Düne
Dune



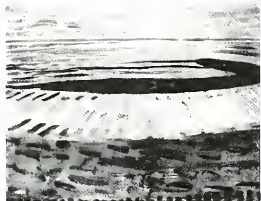
217 Dune (c. 1909)
Dune
Dune



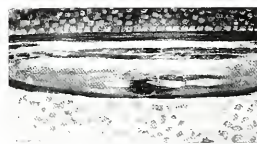
218 Dune (c. 1910)
Dune
Dune



219 Dune (c. 1910)
Dune
Dune



220 Sea at Sunset (1909)
Meer bei Sonnenuntergang
La mer au soleil couchant



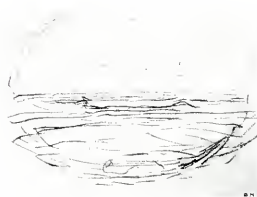
221 Beach near Domburg (c. 1909)
Strand bei Domburg
La plage à Domburg



222 The Sea (Zeeland) (c. 1909-10)
Meerbild (Zeeland)
La mer (Zélande)



223 The Sea (1912)
Das Meer
La mer



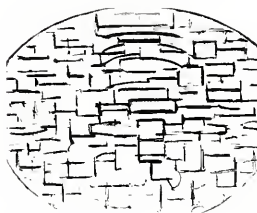
224 The Sea (c. 1914)
Das Meer
La mer



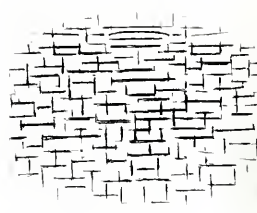
225 The Sea (c. 1914)
Das Meer
La mer



226 The Sea (1914)
Seelandschaft
Marine



227 The Sea (1913-14)
Seelandschaft
Marine



228 The Sea (c. 1914)
Das Meer
La mer



227 The Sea (1914)
s Meer
mer



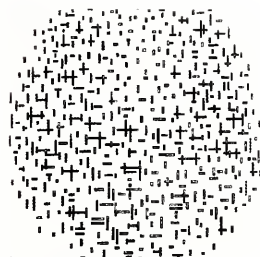
230 Ocean (1914)
Ozean
Océan



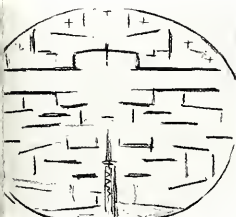
231 Composition (c. 1916)
Komposition
Composition



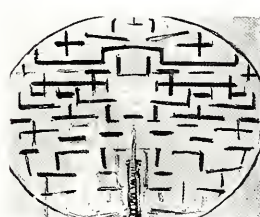
Composition (1916)
Komposition
Composition



233 Composition with Lines (1917)
Komposition mit Linien
Composition avec lignes



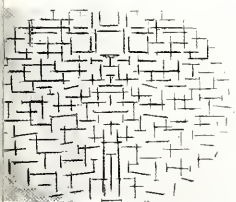
Pier and Ocean (1914)
r und Ozean
e et Océan



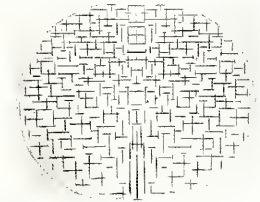
235 Pier and Ocean (1914)
Pier und Ozean
Jetée et Océan



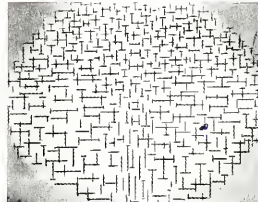
236 Pier and Ocean (1914)
Pier und Ozean
Jetée et Océan



Pier and Ocean (1914)
r und Ozean
e et Océan



238 Pier and Ocean (1914)
Pier und Ozean
Jetée et Océan



239 Pier and Ocean (1915)
Pier und Ozean
Jetée et Océan



240 Lighthouse at Westkapelle (c 1909)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle



241 Lighthouse at Westkapelle c 1909)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle



242 Lighthouse at Westkapelle (c 1910)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle



243 Lighthouse at Westkapelle (c 1910)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle



246 Lighthouse at Westkapelle (c 1910)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle



245 Lighthouse at Westkapelle (c 1910)
Leuchtturm Westkapelle
Tour-phare à Westkapelle

24



246 Church in Zeeland (1908)
Kirche in Zeeland
Eglise en Zélande



247 Church Tower (in Zoutelande, Walcheren) (1910)
Kirchturm (im Zoutelande auf Walcheren)
Taur de l'église (à Zoutelande sur Walcheren)



243 Church at Domburg (c 1910)
Kirche in Domburg
Eglise de Domburg



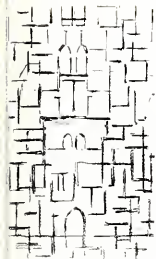
249 Church Tower at Domburg (c 1910)
Kirchturm in Domburg
Tour de l'église de Domburg



253 Church Tower at Domburg (c 1909)
Kirchturm in Domburg
Tour de l'église de Domburg



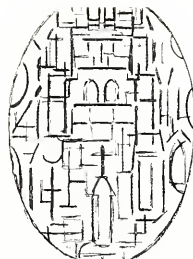
251 Church Tower at Domburg (c.1909)
Kirchturm in Domburg
Tour de l'église de Domburg



2 Church Façade (1914)
Kirchenfassade
Façade d'église



253 Church Façade (1914)
Kirchenfassade
Façade d'église



254 Church at Domburg (c. 1914)
Kirche von Damburg
Eglise à Damburg



3 Church Façade (1914)
Kirchenfassade
Façade d'église



256 Church at Domburg (1914)
Kirche von Domburg
Eglise à Domburg



257 Church Façade (1914)
Kirchenfassade
Façade d'église



8 Church Façade (1914)
Kirchenfassade
Façade d'église



259 Church Façade (?) (1914?)
Kirchenfassade (?)
Façade d'église (?)



260 Untitled (c. 1914)
(ohne Titel)
(sans titre)



1 Roofs (1912)
Dächer
Toits



262 Roofs (1912)
Dächer
Toits



263 Façade (c. 1912)
Fassade
Façade



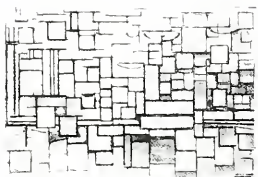
264 Demolished Building, Paris (c 1912)
Hauserwand in Paris
Mur d'une maison à Paris



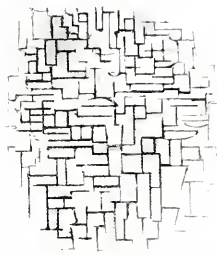
265 Composition No. 7 (1913)
Komposition Nr. 7
Composition No. 7



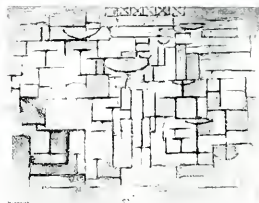
266 Tableau I (1913)



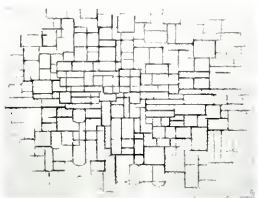
267 Façade in Brown and Gray (1913)
Fassade in Braun und Grau
Façade en brun et gris



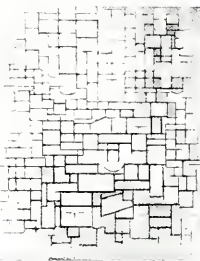
268 Composition in Brown and Gray
(c. 1913)
Komposition in Braun und Grau
Façade en brun et gris



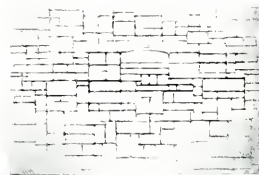
269 Composition in Gray and Yellow
(1914)
Komposition in Grau und Gelb
Composition en gris et jaune



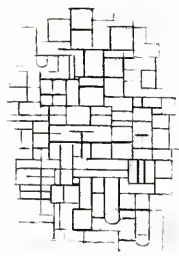
270 Composition in Blue, Gray and Pink
(1913)
Komposition in Blau, Grau und Rosa
Composition en bleu, gris et rose



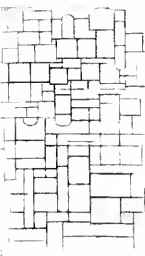
271 Composition No. 7 (Façade) (1914)
Komposition Nr. 7 (Façade)
Composition No. 7 (Façade)



272 Façade No. 7 (1914)
Façade Nr. 7
Façade No. 7



273 Composition No. 6 (1914)
Komposition Nr. 6
Composition No. 6



274 Composition No. 8 (1914)
Komposition Nr. 8
Composition No. 8



275 Oval Composition (Tableau III) (1914)
Komposition in Oval (Tableau III)
Composition ovale (Tableau III)



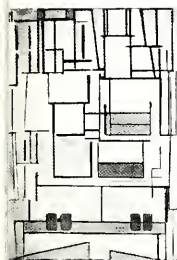
76 Scaffolding (c. 1910)
Gerüst
échafaudage



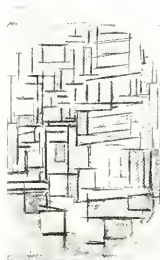
277 Scaffolding (c. 1912)
Gerüst
Echafaudage



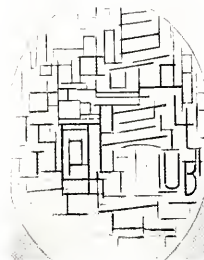
278 Scaffolding (1913)
Gerüst
Echafaudage



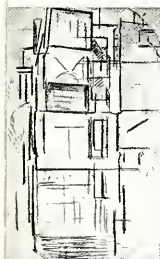
79 Composition No. 9 (Scaffolding)
c. 1913)
Composition Nr. 9 (Gerüst)
Composition No. 9 (Echafaudage)



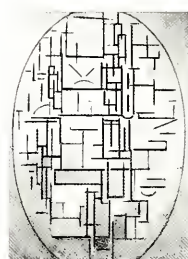
280 Scaffolding (c. 1914)
Gerüst
Echafaudage



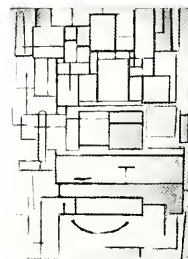
281 Oval Composition (1914)
Komposition in Oval
Composition ovale



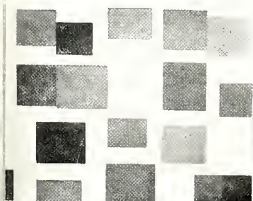
182 Oval Composition (Sketch) (1913)
Entwurf zu einem Ovalbild
Composition ovale (Esquisse)



283 Oval Composition with bright Colors
(1913)
Komposition mit hellen Farben in Oval
Composition ovale avec couleurs claires



284 Composition with Color Planes (1914)
Komposition mit Farbflächen
Composition avec plans de couleur



285 Composition with Color Planes B
(1917)
Komposition mit Farbflächen B
Composition avec plans de couleur B

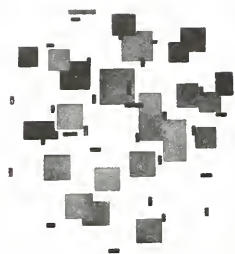


286 Composition No. 3 with Color Planes
(1917)
Komposition Nr. 3 mit Farbflächen
Composition No. 3 avec plans de couleur



287 Composition with Color Planes (1917)
Komposition mit Farbflächen
Composition avec plans de couleur

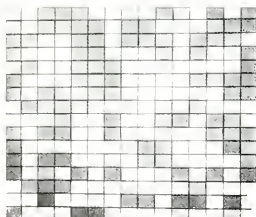
27



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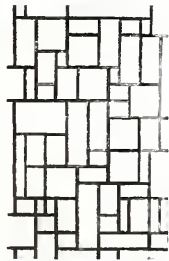
270 Composition with Color Planes on white Ground A (1917)
Komposition mit reinen Farbflächen auf weißem Grund A
Composition aux plans de couleurs pure sur fond blanc A

28



292 Composition; Checkerboard, bright Colors (1919)
Komposition: Damebrett, helle Farben
Composition dans le damier aux couleurs claires

29



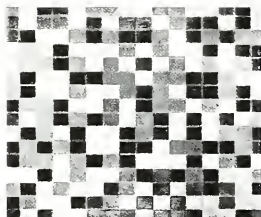
294 Composition with Gray and light Brown (1918)
Komposition in Grau und Hellbraun
Composition en gris et ocre-brun



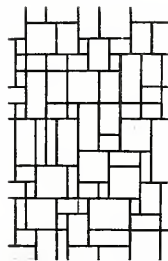
288 Composition with Color Planes No. 5 (1917)
Komposition mit Farbflächen Nr. 5
Composition avec plans de couleur No. 5



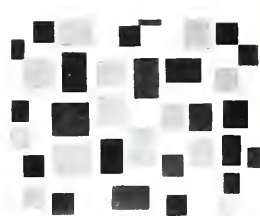
291 Composition in Blue, B (1917)
Komposition in Blau, B
Composition en bleu, B



293 Composition: Checkerboard, dark Colors (1919)
Komposition: Damebrett, dunkle Farben
Composition dans le damier aux couleurs sombres



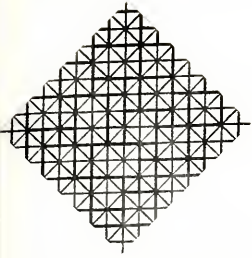
295 Composition in Gray (1919!)
Komposition in Grau
Composition en gris



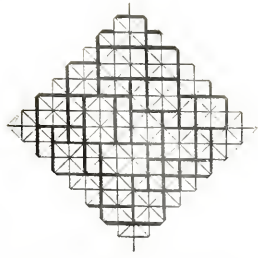
289 Composition with Color Planes on white Ground (1917)
Komposition mit reinen Farbflächen auf weißem Grund
Composition aux plans de couleur pure sur fond blanc



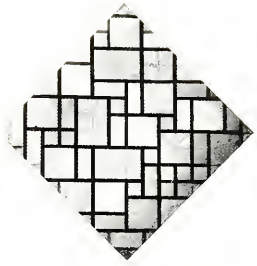
296 Composition: Bright Color Planes with Gray Lines (1919)
Komposition: Helle Farbflächen mit grauen Konturen
Composition aux couleurs claires avec contours gris



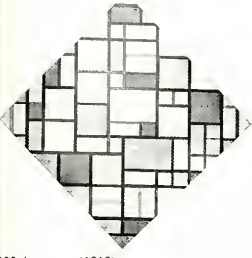
297 Lozenge with Gray Lines (1918)
Raute mit grauen Linien
Composition dans le carreau (avec lignes grises)



298 Lozenge (with Gray Lines) (1919)
Raute (mit grauen Linien)
Composition dans le carreau (avec lignes grises)



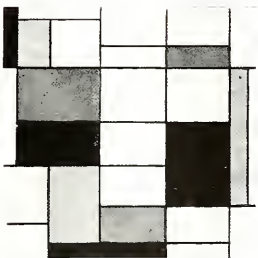
299 Composition: Bright Color Planes with Gray Lines (1919)
Komposition: Helle Farbflächen mit grauen Linien
Composition: de couleurs claires avec lignes grises



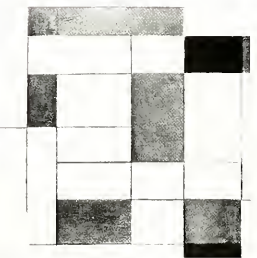
300 Lozenge (1919)
Raute
Composition dans le carreau



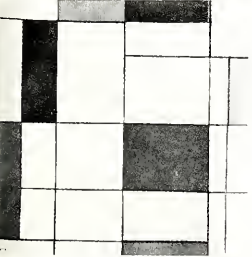
301 Composition: Color Planes with Gray Contours (1919)
Komposition: Farbflächen mit grauen Konturen
Composition: Plans de couleur avec lignes grises



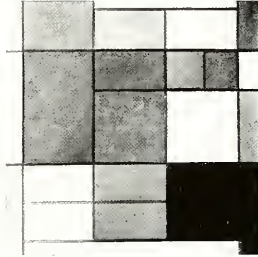
302 Composition (1919)
Komposition
Composition



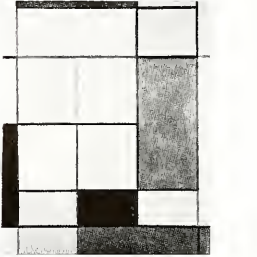
303 Composition in Gray, Red, Yellow and Blue (1920)
Komposition in Grau, Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition en gris, rouge, jaune et bleu



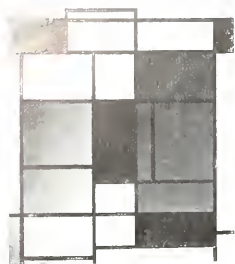
304 Composition (1920)
Komposition
Composition



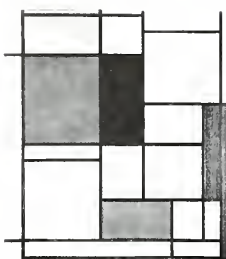
305 Composition with Red, Blue, Black and Yellow-Green (1920)
Komposition mit Rot, Blau, Schwarz und Gelb-Grün
Composition avec rouge, bleu, noir et jaune-vert



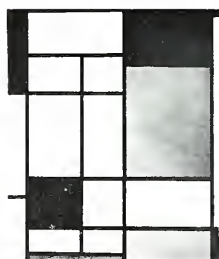
306 Composition with Red, Blue and Green (1920)
Komposition mit Rot, Blau und Grün
Composition avec rouge, bleu et vert



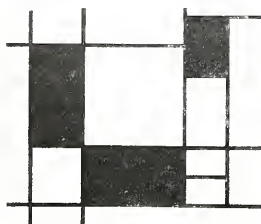
307 Tableau No I (1921-25)



308 Tableau No II (1921-25)



309 Composition (1921)
Komposition
Composition



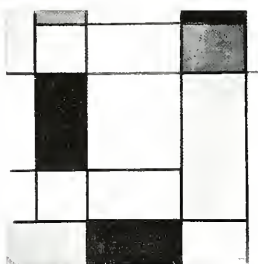
310 Composition with Red, Yellow and
Blue (1920)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



311 Composition with Red, Yellow and
Blue (1921)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



312 Composition (1921)
Komposition
Composition

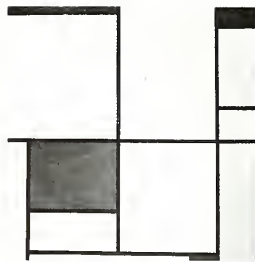


313 Composition (1921)
Komposition
Composition

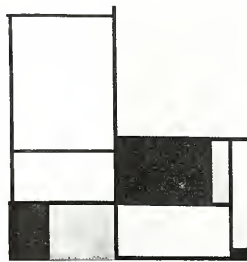


314 Composition (1921)
Komposition
Composition

32



315 Composition with Red, Yellow and
Blue (1921)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



316 Composition (1921)
Komposition
Composition



317 Composition with Great Blue Plane,
and Red and Yellow (1921)
Komposition mit großer Blaufläche, Rot
und Gelb
Composition avec bleu étendu,
rouge et jaune



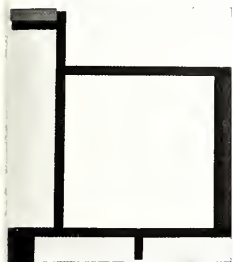
318 Composition in Gray, Blue, Yellow and Red (1921)
Komposition in Grau, Blau, Gelb und Rot
Composition en gris, bleu, jaune et rouge



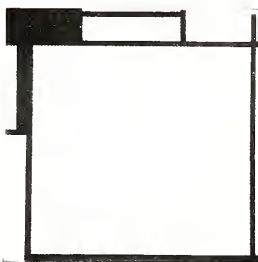
319 Tableau I (1921)



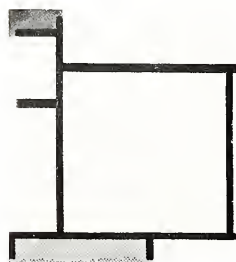
320 Composition (c. 1922)
Komposition
Composition



321 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1921)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



322 Composition in a Square (1922)
Komposition im Quadrat
Composition dans le carré



323 Composition (1922)
Komposition
Composition



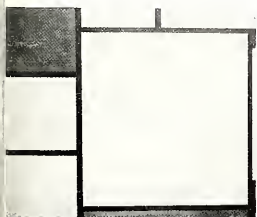
324 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1922)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



325 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1922)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



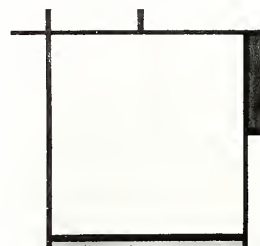
326 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1922)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



327 Composition (1922)
Komposition
Composition



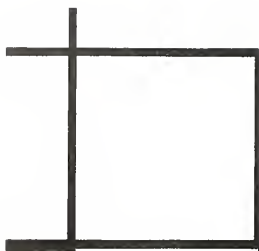
328 Composition (c. 1922)
Komposition
Composition



329 Composition in White, Black, Red and Blue (1925)
Komposition in Weiß, Schwarz, Rot und Blau
Composition en blanc, noir, rouge et bleu



330 Composition (c 1927)
Komposition
Composition



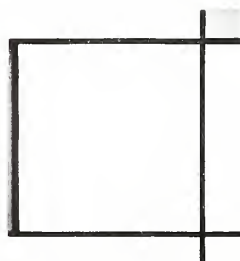
331 Composition in a Square (1926)
Komposition im Quadrat
Composition dans le carré



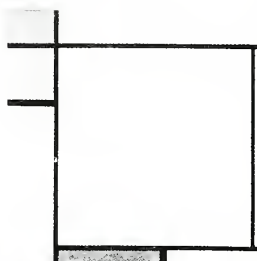
332 Composition (1927)
Komposition
Composition



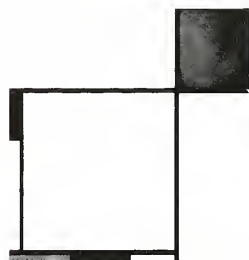
333 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



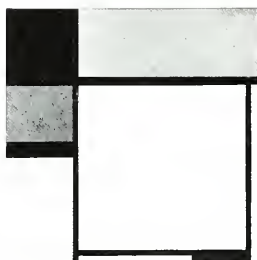
334 Composition III with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)
Komposition III mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition III avec rouge, jaune et bleu



335 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



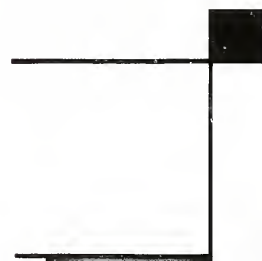
336 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1928)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



337 Fox Trot B (1929)



338 Composition (1925)
Komposition
Composition



339 Composition with Black and Red (1927)
Komposition mit Schwarz und Rot
Composition avec noir et rouge



340 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1928)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



341 Composition II with Red, Blue and yellow (1929)
Komposition II mit Rot, Blau und Gelb
Composition II avec rouge, bleu et jaune



342 Composition in a Square (1929)
Komposition im Quadrat
Composition dans le carré



343 Composition (1929)
Komposition
Composition



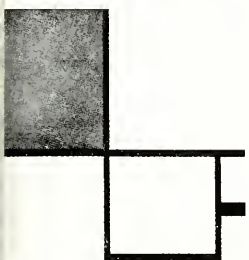
344 Composition with Red, Yellow and blue (1929)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



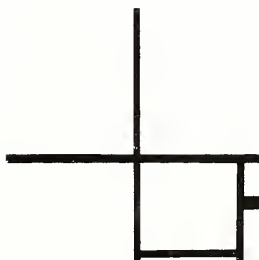
345 Composition with Yellow and Blue (1929)
Komposition mit Gelb und Blau
Composition avec jaune et bleu



346 Composition III (1929)
Komposition III
Composition III



347 Composition II with Yellow and blue (1930)
Komposition II mit Gelb und Blau
Composition II avec jaune et bleu



348 Composition with Yellow Spot (1930)
Komposition mit gelbem Fleck
Composition avec jaune



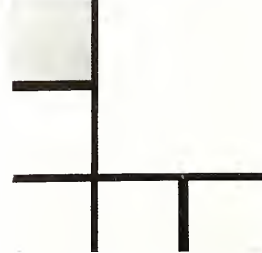
349 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1930)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



350 Composition with Red, Blue and yellow (1930)
Komposition mit Rot, Blau und Gelb
Composition avec rouge, bleu et jaune



351 Composition (1930)
Komposition
Composition



352 Composition I (1930)
Komposition I
Composition I



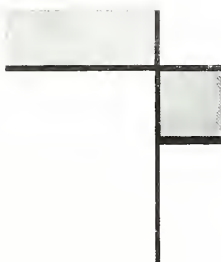
353 Composition (1931)
Komposition
Composition



354 Composition A (1932)
Komposition A
Composition A



355 Composition D, with Red, Yellow and Blue (1932)
Komposition D, mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition D, avec rouge, jaune et bleu



356 Composition with Blue and Yellow (1932)
Komposition mit Blau und Gelb
Composition avec bleu et jaune



357 Composition with Yellow and Blue (1933)
Komposition mit Gelb und Blau
Composition avec jaune et bleu



358 Composition with Blue and Red (1933)
Komposition mit Blau und Rot
Composition avec bleu et rouge

35



359 Composition I with Black Lines (1930)
Komposition I mit schwarzen Linien
Composition I avec lignes noires

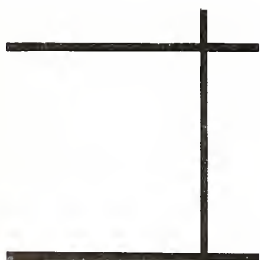


360 Composition 2 with Black Lines (1930)
Komposition 2 mit schwarzen Linien
Composition 2 avec lignes noires

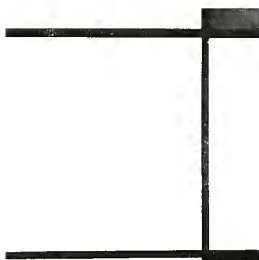


361 Composition with Red, Black and White (1931)
Komposition mit Rot, Schwarz und Weiß
Composition avec rouge, noir et blanc

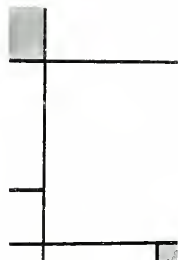
36



362 Composition (c.1926)
Komposition
Composition



363 Composition (c.1927)
Komposition
Composition



364 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



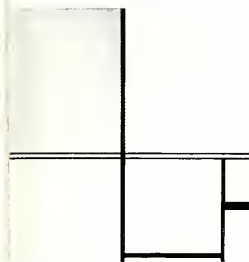
355 Composition (1927)
Komposition
Composition



366 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



367 Large Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow (1928)
Große Komposition mit Rot, Blau und Gelb
Grande Composition avec rouge, bleu et jaune



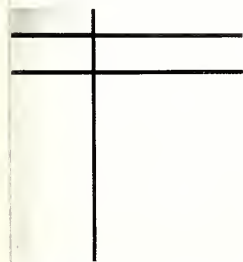
368 Composition B with Gray and Yellow (1932)
Komposition B mit Grau und Gelb
Composition B avec gris et jaune



369 Composition with Yellow and Blue (1933)
Komposition mit Gelb und Blau
Composition avec jaune et bleu



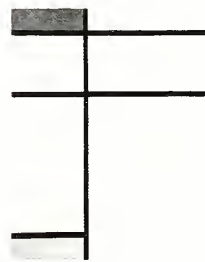
370 Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow (1935)
Komposition mit Rot, Blau und Gelb
Composition avec rouge, bleu et jaune



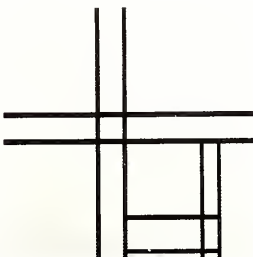
371 Composition (1935)
Komposition
Composition



372 Composition with Red (1936)
Komposition mit Rot
Composition avec rouge



373 Composition III with Blue and Yellow (1936)
Komposition III mit Blau und Gelb
Composition III avec bleu et jaune



374 Composition with Black Lines (c.1933)
Komposition mit schwarzen Linien
Composition aux lignes noires



375 Composition with Colored Square (c.1933)
Komposition mit farbigem Quadrat
Composition avec rectangle de couleur

39



376 Composition B with Red (1935)
Komposition B mit Rot
Composition B avec rouge

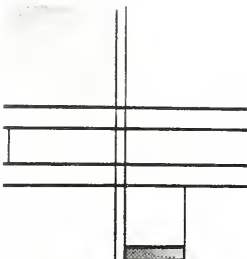


377 Composition with Red and Black
(1936)
Komposition mit Rot und Schwarz
Composition avec rouge et noir

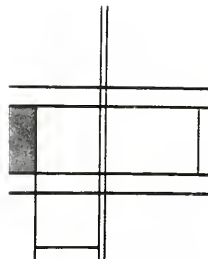


378 Composition (1938)
Komposition
Composition

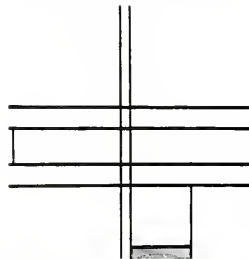
40



379 Composition (1932–36)
Komposition
Composition

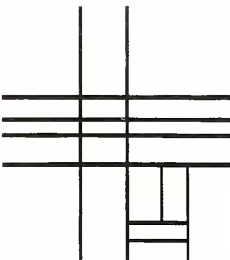


380 Composition (1935)
Komposition
Composition

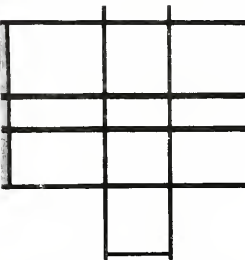


381 Composition with Blue and Yellow
(1936)
Komposition mit Blau und Gelb
Composition avec bleu et jaune

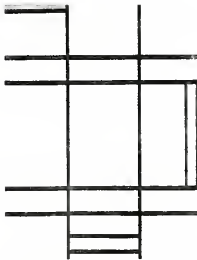
41



382 Composition (1936)
Komposition
Composition

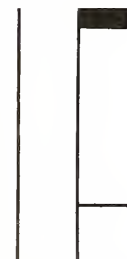


383 Composition with Red and Black
(1937)
Komposition mit Rot und Schwarz
Composition avec rouge et noir



384 Composition with Yellow and Red
(1938–43)
Komposition mit Gelb und Rot
Composition avec jaune et rouge

42



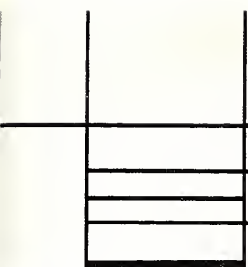
385 Composition with Blue and White
(1936)
Komposition mit Blau und Weiß
Composition avec bleu et blanc



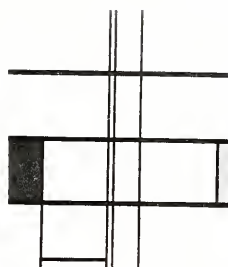
386 Composition (1935–42)
Komposition
Composition



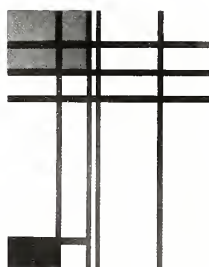
387 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
(1935–42)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



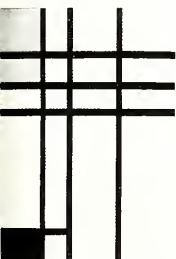
388 Composition with Red and Black
(1936)
Komposition mit Rot und Schwarz
Composition avec rouge et noir



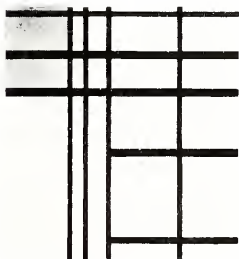
389 Composition with Red and Blue (1936)
Komposition mit Rot und Blau
Composition avec rouge et bleu



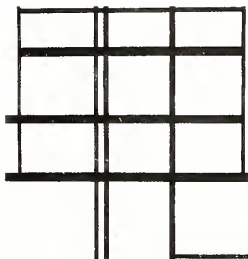
390 Composition with Red and Yellow
(1937)
Komposition mit Rot und Gelb
Composition avec rouge et jaune



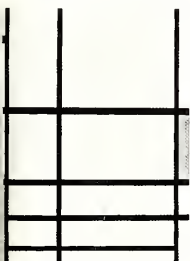
391 Composition with Blue and Yellow
(1937)
Komposition mit Blau und Gelb
Composition avec bleu et jaune



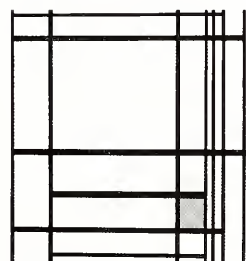
392 Composition (1937)
Komposition
Composition



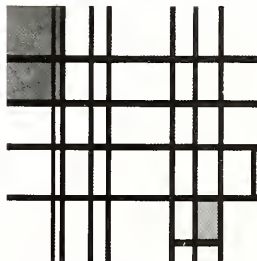
393 Composition with Yellow, Blue and
White (1937)
Komposition mit Gelb, Blau und Weiß
Composition avec jaune, bleu et blanc



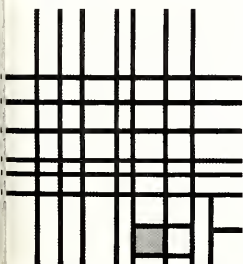
394 Composition 2 with Red and Blue
(1937)
Komposition 2 mit Rot und Blau
Composition 2 avec rouge et bleu



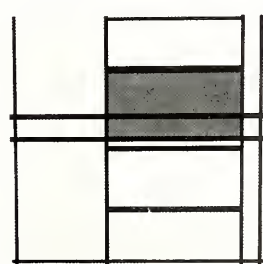
395 Composition with Blue (1937)
Komposition mit Blau
Composition avec bleu



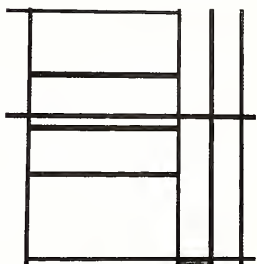
396 Rhythms with Black Lines (1935-42)
Rhythme aus schwarzen Linien
Rythme de lignes noires



397 Composition II with Blue (1936-42)
Komposition II mit Blau
Composition II avec bleu



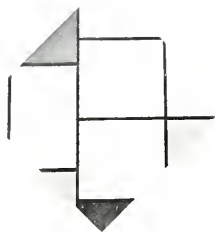
398 Composition with Red (c. 1939)
Komposition mit Rot
Composition avec rouge



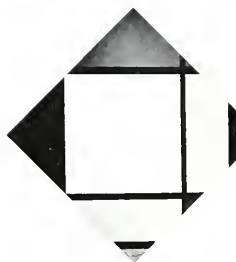
399 Composition with Red (1939)
Komposition mit Rot
Composition avec rouge



400 Composition in a Square (1921)
Komposition im Quadrat
Composition dans le carré



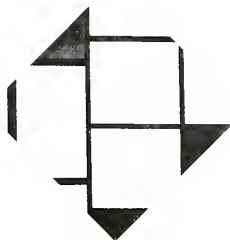
401 Composition in a Square with Red,
Yellow and Blue (c. 1923)
Komposition im Quadrat mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition dans le carré avec rouge,
jaune et bleu



402 Composition in a Square (1925)
Komposition im Quadrat
Composition dans le carré



403 Composition I with Blue and
Yellow (1925)
Komposition I mit Blau und Gelb
Composition I avec bleu et jaune



404 Composition in a Square with Red,
Yellow and Blue (1926)
Komposition im Quadrat mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition dans le carré avec rouge,
jaune et bleu



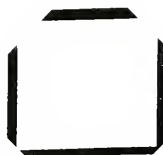
405 Composition in White and Black
(1926)
Komposition in Weiß und Schwarz
Composition en blanc et noir



406 Composition with Black and Blue
(1926)
Komposition mit Schwarz und Blau
Composition avec noir et bleu



407 Fox Trot A (1927)



408 Composition 1-A (1930)
Komposition 1-A
Composition 1-A



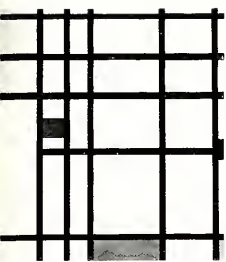
409 Composition with Two Lines (1931)
Komposition mit zwei Linien
Composition avec deux lignes



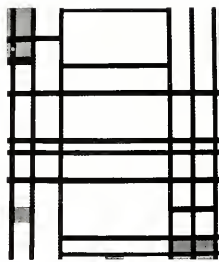
410 Composition with Yellow Lines (1933)
Komposition mit gelben Linien
Composition avec lignes jaunes



411 Composition in a Square with Red
Corner (1943)
Komposition im Quadrat mit roter Ecke
Composition dans le carré avec coin rouge



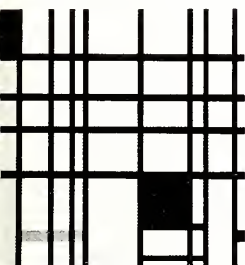
412 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1936-43)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



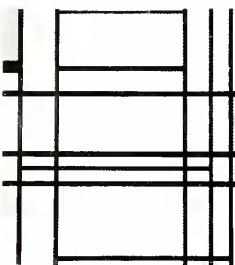
413 Composition (c. 1936-42)
Komposition
Composition



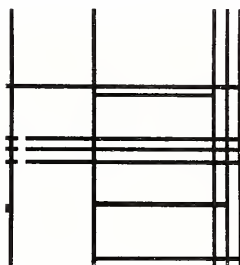
414 Composition No 7 (1937-42)
Komposition Nr 7
Composition No 7



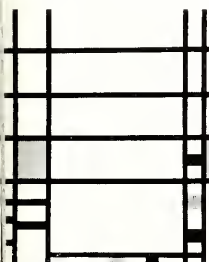
415 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1939-42)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



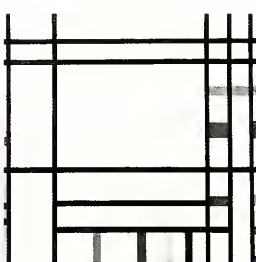
416 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1939-42)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu



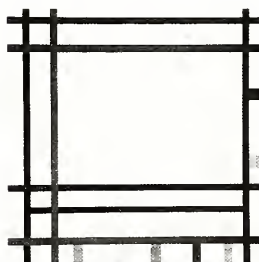
417 Composition in Black, White, Yellow and Red (1939-42)
Komposition in Schwarz, Weiß, Gelb und Rot
Composition en noir, blanc, jaune et rouge



418 Trafalgar Square (1939-43)



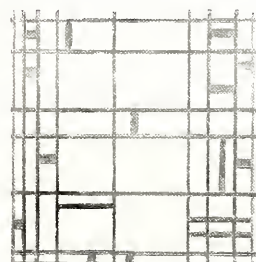
419 Place de la Concorde (1933-43)



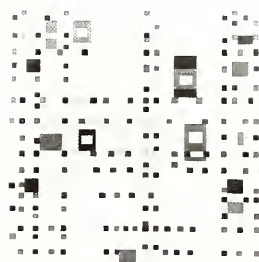
420 New York (1941-42)



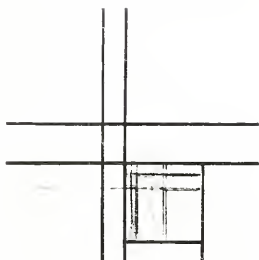
421 New York (1942)



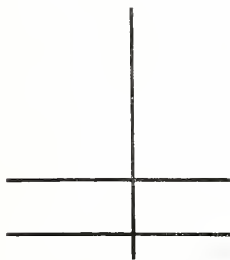
422 Broadway Boogie-Woogie (Study, Studie, Etude) (1942)



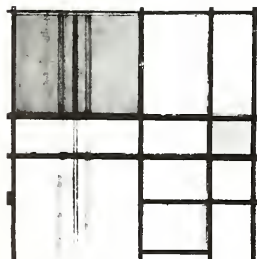
423 Broadway Boogie-Woogie (1942-43)



426 Composition with Yellow (unfinished)
(1936–44)
Komposition mit Gelb (unvollendet)
Composition avec jaune (inachevée)



429 Composition (unfinished) (1938)
Komposition (unvollendet)
Composition (inachevée)



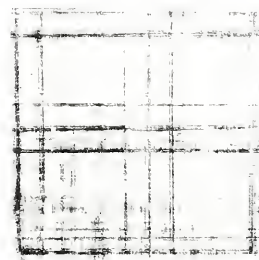
432 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (unfinished) (1939–44)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau (unvollendet)
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (inachevée)



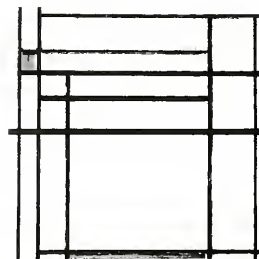
424 Victory Boogie-Woogie (Sketch, Skizze, Esquisse) (c 1943)



427 Composition with Red (unfinished)
(1938–44)
Komposition mit Rot (unvollendet)
Composition avec rouge (inachevée)



430 Composition (unfinished) (1938–44)
Komposition (unvollendet)
Composition (inachevée)



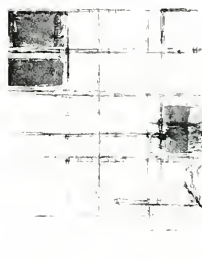
433 Composition (unfinished) (1939–44)
Komposition (unvollendet)
Composition (inachevée)



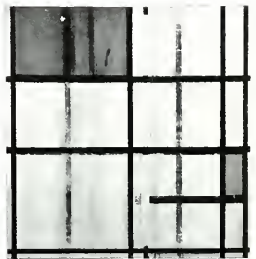
425 Victory Boogie-Woogie (1943–44)



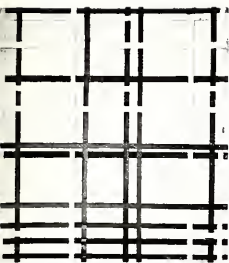
428 Composition with Blue (unfinished)
(c. 1938)
Komposition mit Blau (unvollendet)
Composition avec bleu (inachevée)



431 Collage (Sketch, Skizze, Esquisse)
(1939–44)



434 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (unfinished) (1939–44)
Komposition mit Rot, Gelb und Blau (unvollendet)
Composition avec rouge, jaune et bleu (inachevée)



435 New York City (No.2) (unfinished
unvollendet/inachevée) (1942)



436 New York City (No.3) (unfinished
unvollendet/inachevée) (c 1942)



437 Stage Set I, Bühnenbild, décor I:
«L'Ephémère est éternel» (1926)



438 Stage Set II, Bühnenbild II, décor II:
«L'Ephémère est éternel» 1926)



439 Stage Set III, Bühnenbild III, décor III:
«L'Ephémère est éternel» (1926)



440 «Tableau-Poème» with Michel
Seuphor (1928)
«Tableau-Poème» mit Michel Seuphor
«Tableau-Poème» avec Michel Seuphor



441 Composition (c.1912)
Komposition
Composition

48

49

Comments

I. Documents

p. 25 This photograph of Mondrian at the age of fifty-seven gives us a good picture of his character. The face is regular, the forehead high, the straight and determined nose is that of a Western idealist, the mouth is sensitive and firm, the chin square but without arrogance. The eyes are attentive and penetrating. The clearly outlined and slightly raised head is that of an aristocrat. All the features bespeak a rational disposition. (Photo M. Seuphor, 1929.)

p. 26 Mondrian's parents at the time of their marriage. Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan, schoolteacher (1839–1915), and his wife, née Johanna Christina Kok.

p. 27 Mondrian at the age of eighteen, with his sister and three brothers. From left to right: Carel (aged 10), Piet, Christiane (aged 20), Willem (aged 16), and Louis (aged 13). The photograph was taken shortly before Willem left for the West Indies as private secretary to the Governor General.

p. 29 Mondrian in the attic of the St. Lucas Guild (Rembrandt Square, Amsterdam) where he set up his studio after his return from Brabant in 1905.

p. 30 Mondrian at the age of thirty-nine. He has shed his beard and begins a new stage of his career.

p. 31 The entrance to the studio in the Rue du Départ seen from inside, with the artificial flower that symbolized for Mondrian a feminine presence.

p. 33 (top) Mondrian and a few friends. At left, Georges Vantongerloo and Torrès-Garcia. (Photo Michel Seuphor, 1929.)

p. 33 Mondrian among a group of friends. From left to right: Michel Seuphor, Mondrian, Georges Vantongerloo, Luigi Russolo, Voronca, Céline Arnaud (seated), Paul Dermée, Tysliava, Rafalowski, Stasjewski. (Photographed on June 9, 1928.)

p. 34 Several members of the Circle and Square, photographed on the occasion of the exhibition held by this group at 23 Rue de la Boétie in April 1930. From left to right: Francisca Clausen (Denmark), Florence Henry (France), Mme Torrès-Garcia, Joaquin Torrès-Garcia (Uruguay), Piet Mondrian, Jean Arp, Daura (Spain), Marcelle Cahn (France), Sophie Taeuber-Arp (Switzerland), Michel Seuphor, Vordemberge-Gildewart (Germany), Vera Idelson (Russia), Luigi Russolo (Italy), Mme Kandinsky, Georges Vantongerloo (Belgium), Vasily Kandinsky (Russia), Jean Gorin (France).

pp. 36–37–38 Mondrian's last studio. Photographed by Fritz Glarner in 1944, shortly after the artist's death.

p. 40 Mondrian's grave in Cypress Hill cemetery. The equality of death under the universal grass. The arrangement of the identical graves remind one of the Neo-Plastic works of 1918.

p. 146 At left, *Composition III*, City by Vilmos Huszar; at right, two abstract versions of a still life by Van Doesburg.

p. 261 On the easel an unfinished painting representing farmer with scythe.

II. Works

C. C. 1 First self-portrait. About 1900. At the lower left one can see the two-line inscription added by Van den Briel. The paintings on canvas and on cardboard of the period following that of Mondrian's studies at the Academy display a tendency to broad strokes, which asserts itself in this self-portrait and in many landscapes. P. 221

C. C. 8 Self-Portrait, painted in 1918, at Slijper's request. Signed Mondriaan, with two a's. On his arrival in Paris early in 1919, Mondrian returned to the signature "Mondrian" (with one a) which he had adopted in Paris in 1912. Compare this painting with the drawing of 1912 (C. C. 6). Plate P. 21

C. C. 12-14 Portraits of little girls. The gently surprised expression of the eyes, and the kindness radiating from the faces reveal Mondrian's profound religiosity. These works make one think of Odilon Redon. P. 230

C. C. 14-15 Mondrian often amazes us by the diversity of the techniques he used prior to his first Paris period. But in his early Zeeland period this diversity is manifested in an unexpectedly strong luminosity. C. C. 15 is a typical example of the Pointillist manner, while in C. C. 14 the technique is the opposite of Pointillist: the long strokes are reminiscent of Munch. In these two works the light blue is dominant. In C. C. 14, however, the hair is red, and creates a violent contrast.

C. C. 20, 28, 55, 67 The Cubist influence is evident in these four canvases painted in Paris in 1912. They are done in somber colors. Browns and dark grays are dominant. Plate p. 103, pp. 247, 248, 250

C. C. 23-24 Two nudes from the Holtzman collection in New York. Mondrian must have signed them shortly before his death: until 1912 he had always signed his works "Mondriaan", with two a's. P. 67

C. C. 26-27 The triptych "Evolution." The parallel hatchings and the geometric designs of the "Great Dune" reappear here, as well as the mauve color that Mondrian liked so much in his Brabant and Zeeland periods. The theosophic influence is evident. Various trilogical symbols might be invoked for the interpretation of this work: it could, for instance, be entitled "The Slumbering Flesh," "The Awakening of the Spirit," and "The Inner Face." P. 237

C. C. 29 This large drawing (Holtzman collection) is supposed to be a study of a nude. However that may be, it is a beautiful abstract composition, whose curved, very fluid lines bring to mind the *Flowering Apple tree* and the *Flowering Tree No. 4* (C. C. 179). It was probably done in 1912. P. 121

C. C. 33 Still Life with Gingerpot, I. Probably one of the first works painted in Paris in 1912. Plate p. 101

C. C. 34 Still Life with Gingerpot, II. In this new version, too, the subject merely provides a pretext for a play of lines and colors. The transparent green of the form at the center contrasts with the subtle grays that surround it. This is a simple and moving dialogue between two tranquil energies. P. 249

C. C. 39 "I preferred to paint landscapes and houses seen in a gray, dark weather or in very strong sunlight, when the density of atmosphere obscures the details and accentuates the large outlines of objects" (*Toward the True Vision of Reality*).

C. C. 44 A painting of great romantic sweep, typical for Dutch art of that period. A nocturnal effect achieved with a few brush strokes. P. 225

C. C. 59-61 A series of pictures representing woods, dating probably from the Brabant period (there are scarcely any woods around Amsterdam or in Zeeland). One of these pictures (p. 224) is a large watercolor done entirely in dull lavender tones. It is a simple variation on the verticals of the tree trunks. The background curiously ends in a point that is the symmetrical center of the canvas. A single diagonal – a forest trail or the suggestion of a road – cuts across the horizontal of the tree in the foreground. Plate p. 71, p. 224

C. C. 62-63 A simple subject such as this group of trees is used to test various techniques. A certain time interval must however be assumed between the two pictures. Pp. 214, 215

C. C. 64 This large drawing, entitled *The Haunted Woods*, and dating from the academic period, is of special interest. "It is a woods like any other, but it was so named because a man had hanged himself there and no peasant ventured to enter it after sunset." P. 220

C. C. 76-77 These drawings remind one of Van Gogh, particularly his Dutch period. Pp. 65, 66

C. C. 95 This canvas, which Conrad Kickert presented to the Municipal Museum of The Hague, is of a striking dramatic effect. It is almost a monochrome; the colors used are very dark blues and mauves, but the blues are dominant. A bit of gray mixed with mauve indicates the birch trunks. The unsized canvas left bare in many places adds a soft note amid the powerful dark blues and mauves. Done with a few very broad strokes of a thick brush. Plate p. 59

C. C. 96 The same subject is treated in this nocturne, which brings to mind certain Van Goghs.

C. C. 102-113 Isolated mills provide Mondrian with another favorite subject. He treated it in various ways throughout his Dutch period. In C. C. 112 (p. 240) the somber colors are lightly veiled by gray, and eloquent simple lines enhance the dramatic effect. Another remarkable work (C. C. 113) is done entirely in primary colors. For the first time the painter renounces the attraction of the mauves and oranges in an important work. This *Mill*, one of the most beautiful works of the Zeeland period, is the creation of a visionary who has seen the sun transform nature, but who has himself been no less transformed – inwardly – by the light. Plate p. 95, p. 240

C. C. 122 The external subject is unimportant here: the artist's pleasure in painting is the real subject. The very simple lines of this farmhouse cut by the tall vertical trees are ideally suited to enhance this pleasure. The painter's moods are expressed here in different techniques, just as the various moods of the sky and the seasons are expressed in the subject itself. P. 213

C. C. 150-151 Marigolds. Date and signature were added much later.

A century earlier Hokusai had painted almost identical flowers – *Asters* (British Museum). The similarity, entirely accidental, is striking: the humble flower determines the choice of a humble technique. Mondrian will manifest the same humility later, in his Neo-Plastic works. In one case, the artist bows to reality, in the other to the law governing this reality. P. 68

C. C. 169–175 Here is a first series of trees. Once again, the variety of the techniques used is surprising. The same tree served as a model four times. Probably painted at Domburg, in 1910 or 1911. Plate p. 83, pp. 90, 244, 245

C. C. 176, 177, 179 The same tree is painted or drawn in various ways. C. C. 176 shows a pink tree on gray ground. The background in itself has a strong horizontal-vertical rhythm. The tree enters into an orchestration of lines and colors. In the *Flowering Appletree* (C. C. 179), the subject merely provides a pretext for a pure concert of nuances and delicate lines. Opalescent pinks and blues sing softly in the subtle harmony of grays.

C. C. 178 It is difficult to recognize the lines of a tree in this *Flowering Tree No. 4*, which was probably painted in Paris in 1912. Here, the division of the surface and the harmony of the lines are the sole purpose of the picture. Although the arrangement of these lines might suggest swaying branches, the artist makes no concession to evoke the subject. This is already abstract art.

Plate p. 115

C. C. 180 ff. Drawings of trees, all of them in the Holtzman collection, New York. Problems of linear expression. Note that the harmonious sinuous forms of the trees yield gradually to a rectilinear style. In the drawing reproduced p. 246 the branches display a tendency to form right angles with the trunk, but they do not lose their sinuous forms. These trees retain their natural elegance. Half-erased geometric motifs in the background. Pp. 91, 246

C. C. 198 Composition based on trees. Black and gray lines, some in sienna. A bit of yellow on white and gray grounds. This large sketch was done very quickly, as can be seen from the outline consisting of one swift brush stroke.

Plate p. 97

C. C. 200 This admirable canvas in gray and yellow is one of the best pieces of Mondrian's Cubist phase. It has the discreet coloring of the Braques and Picassos of the same period, but Mondrian no longer tries to interpret or transpose any object, however insignificant it may be. It is painting itself that is the subject of this painting. Nature is no longer translated, and there is nothing between the beholder's eyes and the harmonies of lines and colors he sees, just as in music there is nothing between the listener's ears and the sounds he perceives. That is doubtless why such paintings have sometimes been called "symphonies."

Plate p. 131

C. C. 204–210 The sea seems to have attracted Mondrian even more strongly than subjects such as the tree, the scaffolding, the church façade. The contrasting rhythms of the dunes and of the sea are strongly emphasized in several drawings dating from 1908. Other drawings, dating from 1909, render the rhythm of the sea or the breakwaters, still others only the shimmering expanse of the sea. All these drawings are of an extraordinary sensitivity.

C. C. 211–219 Series of dunes, all in bright colors. Delicate mauve and orange tones particularly attracted the painter. Plate p. 85, p. 239

C. C. 216 Here the mauve is dominant. Note the geometric cross-hatchings of the sky and their counterpart in the lower part of the picture: Mondrian obviously strives for a style in order to simplify nature and thus better express its grandeur and silence. P. 238

C. C. 220–230 The painter comes to grips with a seemingly insoluble problem – how to express in static language the rhythm of the sea,

eternally changing and eternally the same. His attempts to solve it result in a series of curious drawings, each of them within a horizontally placed oval.

C. C. 231 So-called Plus-Minus composition. Here we have the end result of this long search. This canvas is a calm vibration, an inward scintillation. The "peace of the summits" dwells within each thing, and is disclosed to us by a mystic glance.

C. C. 232 This composition shows black lines on an orange red and pale blue ground. This is the only work of the so-called Plus-Minus series in which colors are used. Here all of Mondrian's favorite themes converge. The fundamental law is the horizontal-vertical rhythm. Top and bottom, left and right, large and small, front and rear, life and death are identical. Nothing comes to a stop, but everything is regulated by a definite law. P. 260

C. C. 233 Composition in black on white, with short, broad lines, almost surfaces. This is the last work of the so-called Plus-Minus series, a plastic variation on the simplest theme ever created in painting. The differentiation of the painted surface effected solely by means of the horizontal-vertical motif, is extraordinary. We can see clearly that any theme contains a world of possibilities. We can also see that the greatest simplicity makes possible the greatest strength. A Dutch critic called this painting "Christmas Eve." This name seems to be intended as a kind of romantic excuse for the painter. A hundred other names could be applied with equal justification to this abstract painting of the purest beauty.

C. C. 238 Pier and Ocean. Drawing corrected with white gouache. The composition has now acquired full assurance. There are no slanting lines. The square opening on top that appears in other similar drawings (cf. C. C. 234–237) is here removed by a division into quarters. The definitive solution seems to be at hand.

C. C. 240–245 The lighthouse at Westkapelle, one of Mondrian's favorite subjects during his stay at Domburg, is treated in various techniques. The artist seems to have been fascinated by the verticality of this tall square tower, which stands almost isolated in the countryside. It inspired him with an inexhaustible lyricism. Plate p. 87, pp. 232–234.

C. C. 248–260 The façade of the church of Domburg is another favorite subject of Mondrian's. He begins in 1909 with drawings and paintings that are still very naturalistic. But even before his departure for Paris (end of 1911) he produces variations that tend to abstraction (drawings in the sketchbooks of the Holtzman collection). On his return to Domburg in 1914 he again treats this theme. Did this façade suggest theosophic analogies to Mondrian? It is clear from the very first painting (Plate p. 75) that he was impressed by the rhythm of the windows situated one above the other, whose buttresses enhance the ascending aspect. Is there a mystical interpretation of these pairs of windows of very different dimensions? Mondrian's repeated treatment of this subject suggests that for him all this had a precise meaning. But just as was the case with the series of trees and the series of scaffoldings, the horizontal and vertical rhythm gradually supplants all others, and the Gothic windows are eliminated. Plate p. 75

C. C. 259 This large drawing, dated 1913, but probably done in 1914, is the only work of Mondrian's that is inscribed in a perfect circle. It seems to conclude the series of the church façades. It is also the only one of his works

containing an exact, symmetrical cross, which is placed slightly above the geometric center of the circle.

C. C. 270 In this composition the last slanting lines have disappeared, and only a few curves survive. P. 255

C. C. 273-274 Note that these two compositions contain no diagonals or slanting lines. In the first we still find five curved lines, in the second there are only three, all of them at some distance from the center. The coloring of this second canvas is extraordinarily sensitive. The gray of the background is reinforced by a delicate pink and a very small amount of blue and ocher. The lines are black or dark gray. Plate p. 135, p. 259

C. C. 275 This picture was shown at the Maeght gallery in Paris in 1949, and greatly impressed young painters who drew from it a lesson of calm moderation and freedom. Plate p. 153

C. C. 276 ff. The scaffoldings and dilapidated houses of Paris supply the painter with a new motif for large drawings and monochromes. The subject of these paintings matters little: all of them are abstract compositions in which the horizontal-vertical order gradually achieves dominance. Between 1912 and 1914 Mondrian, like the Cubists, greatly favored the oval. But nothing in his works now suggests a naturalistic object: they are true abstractions. According to some writers, the ovoid symbolizes the eternally feminine that encloses everything.

C. C. 290 This work, like others dating from the same year, reveals an indisputable affinity with the works of Van Doesburg, Huszar and Van der Leek. But we sense in Mondrian a greater freedom of action, no doubt because he alone at that time is independent of any naturalistic subject.

C. C. 292-293 These two very curious paintings, divided into regular tile-like shapes irregularly colored in gray, pink, ocher and pale blue, date from the same year 1919. One (Plate p. 157) is bright and melodious, the other (C. C. 293) is less brilliant and much darker. Note the same basic division in the gray painting reproduced above. Plate p. 157, p. 265

C. C. 294-296 Early in 1919 when Mondrian returned to Paris he no longer found there the exuberant yet rational inspiration of the Cubist period. *De Stijl* had been founded in the interval, and the new ideas were assuming their definite form in writings then being published. *De Stijl* was a school of architecture, and from then on Mondrian would be an architect, i. e., he would make use of the precise geometric and rectilinear elements of architecture, but arranging them freely. The last works he painted in Holland and the first works he painted in Paris are uniformly gray canvases, in which divisions are created by black or dark gray lines. These divisions bring to mind the abstract stained-glass windows composed by Van Doesburg and Huszar at about that time. P. 265

C. C. 297-300 Here are square canvases showing an exact checkerboard pattern. In C. C. 298 this appears in the form of a lozenge, which is again divided into exact squares. Only the enhancement of a few lines effects a composition in this new division. This composition can be detached from the canvas for better legibility. Then we realize that it has been used for another lozenge-shaped canvas dating from the same year (1919), in which it appears, with slight variations, much more clearly on a ground where delicate colors almost blur the lines of the checkerboard pattern. Plate p. 155, pp. 266, 267

C. C. 301–314 In 1920 Mondrian begins to divide the surface into rectangles of various dimensions creating dynamic contrasts. But the colors have not yet achieved their great precision. Plates pp. 159, 161, 165, pp. 268, 269

C. C. 346 This canvas is one of the first of a long and beautiful series of variations on a very similar arrangement, which begins late in 1928 and ends in 1932, and which is perhaps the most classical part of Mondrian's painting. The Neo-Plastic icon has achieved perfection.

C. C. 359 Occasionally Mondrian confines himself to the trenchant austerity of black and white without any addition of color. He strives to discover an absolute, irrevocable law, and to express it plainly, omitting all nuances.

C. C. 409 Mondrian's admirers commissioned this picture as the sole decoration for the main room of the Hilversum city hall, which was built in 1931 by the architect Dudok. This is the simplest of all of Mondrian's compositions. An end, a beginning, perhaps the summit of his life work – the snow and the air of high altitudes. Art is here stripped to the bone. An unprecedented example of a total clean sweep, and in the void thus created, the simple affirmation constituted by two lines intersecting at a right angle, one of them being slightly thicker than the other. This difference in thickness perhaps epitomizes the whole art of composition. A work as keen as it is bare. But you would seek it in vain in the room for which it was destined – and in fact it would look very much out of place there. It has most fittingly been relegated to a small side room, where it is exposed to the sarcasms of the municipal councillors. Such is the common lot of all exceptional things and beings.

C. C. 419 Begun in Paris in 1938, and completed in New York in 1943, *Place de la Concorde* marks the first appearance of colored lines. P. 298

C. C. 421 New York City. 1942. Except for the canvas with yellow lines in the Museum of The Hague, this is Mondrian's first work without black. It contains four red lines, four blue lines, and fifteen yellow lines on a white ground. It is a strange work, and has given rise to a certain amount of discussion. Its effect may be confusing because the bands of colors are superimposed, so giving an impression of *trompe-l'oeil*. Like all Mondrian's works, it should be considered in the light of his development. It comes after *Place de la Concorde*, which foreshadows the colored lines, and before *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, in which the lines are broken. Even so, it deserves to be considered on its own merits. Clearly Mondrian is entering a new phase. Having absorbed New York, he expresses in vivid colors his delight in inhabiting this rectangular city. Even if this work is "an error," as is claimed by some Neo-Plasticists, it bears witness to Mondrian's indomitable youth. It can be regarded as a beginner's venture, with all the risks this implies. To me it expresses above all the joy in living of a septuagenarian who has finally found the climate best suited to him. Plate p. 183

C. C. 435–436 There are several studies for New York City. The use of different colored strips of scotch tape, which are inevitably superimposed at points of intersection, accounts for the reproduction of this arrangement in the painting. Mondrian had not yet thought of constructing the lines from small squares, as he did in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*. P. 299

C. C. 425 It is of symbolic significance that Mondrian's last work should have remained unfinished. In his case, to be sure, this may seem a mistake of history – for he was the most meticulous of men. But is any work ever finished?

Is not the whole universe engaged in a work that is moving toward an illusory goal? It is this movement toward a goal that is perhaps the deepest meaning of man and of every human achievement. No other painter's life seems so clearly to represent a continuous progress as Mondrian's. We have come to the end of his progress; and it is perhaps a good thing that it ends with suspension points. This *Victory* may be regarded as a synthesis of New York, as it appeared every day to the painter whose last living quarters were situated at the center of this prodigious rectangular whirlpool. This painting reminds us of the tense vibration of the Plus-Minus series, and of the colored planes in the works dating from 1917. Thus *Victory Boogie-Woogie* is full of reminiscences of older periods, it is a synthesis of all of Mondrian's abstract works. At the same time it is absolutely new, and seems to open the gates to unknown territory – *hic incipit vita nova*. Here, there is no black. All must be light; henceforth there shall be no night, no evil, no old age. The life of future mankind will be an uninterrupted sequence of joys, an invention of reasonable deliriums, of channelized exaltation, a composition of styles and profound emotions. This unfinished canvas is the youngest, the freshest of all Mondrian's paintings, it is an outburst of eternal youth, the tranquil laughter of a city bedecked with flags on a Sunday in summer. Oil on canvas, with many strips of colored scotch tape. Plate p. 191

C. C. 441 A curious polychrome sketch on unsized cardboard. The spots of color are surrounded by an oily halo.

Mondrian's Signatures

Piet Mondriaan

Barge on the Amstel: Evening
c.1892-95

C.C.123

Piet MONDRIAAN

Landscape with Bridge and Farmer
c.1900-05

C.C.40

PIET MONDRIAAN

The River Amstel
c.1905

C.C.73

PIET MONDRIAAN · 1907

Amaryllis
1907

C.C.158

MONDRIAN. 1914.

Composition VIII
1914

C.C.274

Piet mondrian

Seascape
1913-14

C.C.227

P1 17

Composition with Color Planes on White Ground A
1917

C.C. 290

PIET MONDRIAN

28

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
1928

C.C. 336

P M '29

Composition
1929

C.C. 343

P M 30

Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow
1930

C.C. 350

Mondrian

Letter to Harry Holtzman
1938

p. 175

Piet Mondrian

Autobiographical essay
1941

p. 23

Mondrian

Letter to Mr. Richter
1944

List of All Known Works

All known works of Mondrian are arranged by year. Information for each item is given in the following order: title, date, medium or technique, measurements (height before width), owner, page reference to reproduction, and number in Classified Catalogue (= C.C.). (Measurements and owners' names are supplied wherever the information was available.)

Particular thanks are due to Dr. Georg Schmidt, M.S.B. Slijper, Dr. H.L.C. Jaffé, and Mr. Harry Holtzman who have spared no efforts to make this list as complete as possible.

- 1 Cows by Water – c.1890 – Oil – $17\frac{1}{2} \times 23''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.29 – C.C.85
- 2 Barge on the Amstel: Evening – c.1892/95 – Watercolor – $22 \times 26''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.123
- 3 Still Life with Fish – 1893 – Oil – $26 \times 29\frac{1}{8}''$ – H. Rauch collection, Amsterdam p.210 – C.C.30
- 4 Apples – before 1900 – Watercolor – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{5}{16}''$ – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam C.C.31
- 5 Apples – c.1895 – Watercolor – City Hall, The Hague
- 6 Still Life – before 1900 – $29\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{3}{8}''$ – Groninger Museum vor Stad en Ommelande, Groningen
- 7 Seascape – c.1895 – Oil – $9\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{5}{8}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C.C.35
- 8 Landscape with Boat – c.1895 – Oil – $13\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{5}{8}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C.C.124
- 9 Hayrick near Pond – c.1898 – Watercolor – $25\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{1}{2}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C.36
- 10 Puppy – 1899 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}''$ – J. J. Lambeek, Hilversum C.C.32
- 11 Girl Writing – before 1900 – Charcoal – $22\frac{1}{16} \times 17\frac{1}{2}''$ – Municipal Museum, The Hague
- 12 Moat – before 1900 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 25\frac{3}{16}''$ – Douwe van der Zweep, Utrecht
- 13 Self-Portrait – c.1900 – Oil – $19\frac{1}{4} \times 15''$ – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York p.221 – C.C.1
- 14 Portrait of a Woman – c.1900 – Etching – $13\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 15 Factory – c.1900 – Oil – $13\frac{3}{4} \times 18\frac{7}{8}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C.37
- 16 Shipyard – c.1900 – Oil – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{5}{8}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague p.227 – C. C.38
- 17 The Singel of Amsterdam – c.1900 – Oil – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 18\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 18 Evening Landscape – c.1900 – Oil – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 29\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.39
- 19 Farm in the Evening – c.1900 – Oil – $25\frac{3}{16} \times 29\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 20 Farmhouse – c.1900 – Oil – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 15''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.90
- 21 Mill on River – c.1900 – Oil – $39\frac{3}{8} \times 55\frac{7}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.211 – C.C.102
- 22 Mill – c.1900 – Oil – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{2}''$ – Van Andel, The Hague C.C.103
- 23 On the Gein: Mill in Moonlight – c.1900 – Oil – $39\frac{1}{8} \times 49\frac{1}{4}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague C.C.104
- 24 Mill by the Water – c.1900 – Oil – $11\frac{7}{8} \times 15''$ – The Museum of Modern Art, Purchase Fund, New York p.228 – C.C.105
- 25 Landing Pier – c.1900 – Oil – $14\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.219 – C.C.125
- 26 Flowers – c.1900 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C.C.149
- 27 Church and Fruit Trees – c.1900 – Chalk – $14\frac{9}{16} \times 11\frac{13}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 28 Watergraafsmeer – 1900–1905 – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{5}{16}''$ – Mrs. K. Legat, The Hague
- 29 Landscape – 1900–1905 – $28 \times 44\frac{1}{4}''$ – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam

- 30 Landscape with Bridge and Farmer – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $16\frac{1}{8} \times 22''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.40
- 31 Nocturne with Trees – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $30\frac{3}{4} \times 36\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 32 Woods at Sunset – 1900–1905 – Charcoal – $37\frac{3}{8} \times 59\frac{7}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.56
- 33 Isolated Tree – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.57
- 34 Trees by Water – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 26''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.68
- 35 Farm near Blaricum – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{7}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 36 Cows Grazing – 1900–1905 – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 15''$ – B. M. Kramer, Amersfoort
- 37 Farm and Farmer's Wife – c.1900–1905 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{8} \times 21\frac{11}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.89
- 38 Landscape with Mill – 1900–1905 – Watercolor – $22\frac{1}{2} \times 35\frac{1}{16}''$ – Van Dam collection, London
- 39 Mill – 1900–1905 – $9\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{13}{16}''$ – B. M. Kramer, Amersfoort
- 40 Portrait of a Woman – c.1902 – Watercolor – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.10
- 41 Landscape near Amsterdam – c.1902 – Oil – $11\frac{1}{8} \times 18\frac{7}{8}''$ – Michel Seuphor collection, Paris Plate p.49 – C.C.41
- 42 The River Amstel in the Evening – c.1902 – Oil – $16\frac{1}{2} \times 29\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.43
- 43 Landscape (Study) – c.1902 – Oil – $10 \times 15\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.69
- 44 Trees on the River Gein – c.1902 – Oil – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – Mrs. T. Bruin-Reitsma collection, Heemstede C.C.70
- 45 The River Gein: Trees at Moonrise – c.1902 – Charcoal – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 29\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.71
- 46 Cows Grazing – c.1902 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 23\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.216 – C.C.86
- 47 Study of Cows – c.1902 – Oil – $12\frac{3}{8} \times 16\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.87
- 48 Farm and Trees in Moonlight – c.1902 – Oil – $13\frac{9}{16} \times 18\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.91
- 49 Mill by the Water – c.1902 – Oil – $13\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.106
- 50 The River Gein: Trees at Moonrise – 1902 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C.72
- 51 Landscape – c.1902/03 – Drawing – $14\frac{1}{8} \times 19\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.225 – C.C.44
- 52 Landscape with Cows Grazing – c.1902/03 – Drawing – $17\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.66 – C.C.76
- 53 Autumn Landscape – c.1902/03 – Drawing – $13 \times 18\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.66 – C.C.77
- 54 Willows – c.1902/03 – Charcoal drawing – $23\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.65 – C.C.78
- 55 The River Gein: Willows – c.1903 – Oil – $19\frac{1}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.81
- 56 The River Gein: Willows – c.1903 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{3}{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.223 – C.C.79
- 57 Two Cows – c.1903 – Drawing – $13 \times 17\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 58 The River Gein: Willows – 1903 – Watercolor – $18\frac{7}{8} \times 24\frac{3}{4}''$ – Mrs. T. Bruin-Reitsma collection, Heemstede C.C. 80
- 59 The River Gein: Willows – 1903 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 23\frac{5}{8}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Gallery, The Hague p. 222 – C.C. 82
- 60 Nude, Study for Passionflower – c. 1903/04 – Charcoal – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 31\frac{7}{8}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C. 21
- 61 Passionflower – c. 1903/04 – Watercolor – $27\frac{1}{8} \times 16\frac{1}{2}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C. 22
- 62 White Bull Calf – c. 1903/04 – Watercolor – $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{5}{8}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C. 83
- 63 Woods – c. 1903–1905 – Chalk – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}''$ – Mrs. E. A. van Heek, Delden C.C. 60
- 64 Woods – c. 1903–1905 – Watercolor – $18\frac{1}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 224 – C.C. 61
- 65 Mill by the Lake – c. 1903–1905 – Oil – $10\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 229 – C.C. 107
- 66 Nude – c. 1904 – Pencil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C. 23
- 67 Nude – c. 1904 – Pencil – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 12''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p. 67 – C.C. 24
- 68 Saint Bernard – c. 1904 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 69 Huts by Water – c. 1904 – Oil – $11\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{3}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C. 42
- 70 Landscape in Brabant – c. 1904 – Oil – $18\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 71 Study for Landscape – c. 1904 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 26\frac{1}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 72 Landscape – c. 1904 – Oil – $13 \times 16\frac{15}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 73 Tree – c. 1904 – Oil – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 17\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C. 59
- 74 Willow – c. 1904 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{13}{16}''$ – C. Kickert, Paris C.C. 84
- 75 Farm at Nistelrode – c. 1904 – Watercolor – $17\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{13}{16}''$ – Private collection, Holland Plate p. 56 – C.C. 94
- 76 Evening Landscape – c. 1904 – Oil – $25\frac{3}{16} \times 36\frac{5}{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague Plate p. 59 – C.C. 95
- 77 Night Landscape – c. 1904 – Oil – $13\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{5}{16}''$ – Mrs. Maria Joanna Ootmar collection, Kelowna, British Columbia C.C. 96
- 78 Farm in Brabant – c. 1904 – Oil – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 14\frac{3}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 79 Farm ar Blaricum – c. 1904 – Oil – $10\frac{7}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 80 Sunflower – c. 1904 – Oil – $11\frac{7}{16} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 81 Church and Trees – c. 1904 – Etching – $14\frac{9}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 82 Church and Trees – c. 1904 – Etching – $14\frac{9}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 83 Farmer's Wife in Front of a Farmhouse – 1904/05 – Oil – $13 \times 8\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C. 92
- 84 Farmer's Wife with Child in Front of a Farmhouse – Oil – $13 \times 8\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C. 93
- 85 Portrait of a Woman – c. 1905 – Oil – $21\frac{5}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C. 11

- 86 "Spring" – c.1905 – Charcoal – $27\frac{3}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.25
- 87 Rolling Country – c.1905 – Drawing – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 88 Landscape with Farm – c.1905 – Drawing in black and red – $18\frac{3}{4} \times 24$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 89 Sheepfold in Brabant – c.1905 – Drawing – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 44\frac{1}{2}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 90 Landscape – c.1905 – Drawing – $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 91 The River Amstel – c.1905 – Drawing – $9\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 92 Landscape (study) – c.1905 – Oil – Size unknown – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 93 Landscape (study) – c.1905 – Oil – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 94 Nocturne – c.1905 – Oil – $9\frac{1}{16} \times 18\frac{7}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 95 The River Amstel, Evening – c.1905 – Oil – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 96 Landscape – c.1905 – Oil – $11\frac{7}{16} \times 13\frac{13}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 97 Landscape with Farm – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{9}{16} \times 19\frac{5}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 98 Landscape with Farm and Children – c.1905 – Oil – $25\frac{3}{16} \times 29\frac{3}{8}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam
- 99 The River Amstel – c.1905 – Watercolor – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.73
- 100 Woods – c.1905 – Watercolor – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 101 Trees by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{5}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 102 Trees by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $18\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 103 Orchard – c.1905 – Drawing – $8\frac{1}{16} \times 12\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 104 Willows (study) – c.1905 – Oil – $17\frac{5}{16} \times 11\frac{13}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 105 Willows (study) – c.1905 – Oil – $9\frac{1}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 106 Willows (study) – c.1905 – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 107 Willows by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{9}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 108 Willows by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $16 \times 18\frac{7}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 109 Cows (study) – c.1905 – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 110 Landscape with Cows – c.1905 – Oil – $9\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 111 Cows – c.1905 – Oil – $8\frac{1}{4} \times 15$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 112 Landscape with Cows – c.1905 – Oil – $12\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 113 Landscape with Cows – c.1905 – Oil – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 114 House and Trees by Water – c.1905 – Drawing – $13\frac{3}{8} \times 19\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 115 Farm with Trees – c.1905 – Drawing – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 116 Farm (study) – c.1905 – Oil – $11\frac{7}{16} \times 13\frac{3}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

- 117 Farmhouse near Canal – c.1905 – Oil – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{13}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 118 Farm with Trees by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $16 \times 18\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 119 Farmhouse by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $17 \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 120 Farm by Water – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 121 Farm at Blaricum – c.1905 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{8} \times 18\frac{5}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 122 Farmhouse – c.1905 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 123 Farm – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 8\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 124 Farm – c.1905 – Oil – $18\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 125 Cottage – c.1905 – Oil – $13 \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ " – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C. C. 97
- 126 Farmhouse with Haycock – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 127 Barn – c.1905 – Oil – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 128 Vegetable Garden – c.1905 – Drawing – $17\frac{1}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 129 Mill by the Water – c.1905 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{16}$ " – Dr. J. van der Hoeven Leonhard collection C. C. 108
- 130 Windmill – c.1905 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$ " – Dr. J. van der Hoeven Leonhard collection C. C. 109
- 131 Mill – c.1905 – Oil – $39\frac{3}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{16}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam
- 132 Dredge in the Evening – c.1905 – Oil – $25 \times 29\frac{3}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 226 – C. C. 126
- 133 Amaryllis – c.1905 – Drawing – 30×25 " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 134 Amaryllis – c.1905 – Drawing – 30×25 " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 135 Iris in a Vase – c.1905 – Colored chalk – $23\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 136 Iris Flowers – c.1905 – Oil – $21\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 137 Iris Flowers – c.1905 – Oil – $22\frac{7}{8} \times 12\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 138 Rhododendron – c.1905 – Oil – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 12\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 139 Landscape with Haycock – c.1905 – Oil – $10\frac{5}{8} \times 13$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 140 a–e) Five pages from a Sketchbook – c.1905 – Drawings – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 141 River Scene – c.1905/06 – Oil – Mrs. Henri Crommelin collection C. C. 45
- 142 Dutch Village – c.1906 – Oil – $12\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 46
- 143 a, b) Landscape (study) – c.1906 – Oil – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
(back of a) – Landscape (study) – c.1906 – Oil – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 144 Landscape – c.1906 – Oil – $10\frac{7}{16} \times 14\frac{9}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 145 Landscape – c.1906 – Oil – $25\frac{3}{16} \times 29\frac{3}{16}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam (on loan from J. B. Slijper)
- 146 Evening Landscape – c.1906 – Oil – $29\frac{15}{16} \times 53\frac{2}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 147 Evening Landscape with Haycock – c.1906 – Oil – $26 \times 29\frac{15}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 148 Landscape – c.1906 – Watercolor – $9\frac{1}{16} \times 14\frac{3}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 149 Landscape with Solitary Tree – c.1906 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 150 Landscape with Tree – c.1906 – Oil – $44\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{3}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 151 Trees by Water – c.1906 – Oil – $29\frac{9}{16} \times 47\frac{1}{4}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 152 Trees by Water – c.1906 – Oil – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 16\frac{5}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 153 Canal with Willows – c.1906 – Oil – $8\frac{1}{16} \times 10\frac{5}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 154 Cows Grazing (study) – c.1906 – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{13}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 155 Landscape with Mill – c.1906 – Oil – $26\frac{3}{8} \times 46\frac{1}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 156 Dredge – c.1906 – Chalk – $22\frac{1}{16} \times 44\frac{1}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 157 Boat – c.1906 – Oil – $13 \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 158 Chrysanthemums (study) – c.1906 – Charcoal – $26 \times 10\frac{1}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 159 Chrysanthemums – study – c.1906 – Charcoal – $28\frac{3}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 160 Chrysanthemums – c.1906 – Pencil – $10\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.132
- 161 Chrysanthemum – c.1906 – Pencil – $11\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.133
- 162 Chrysanthemum – c.1906 – Pencil – $11\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{5}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.131
- 163 Chrysanthemum – c.1906 – Watercolor – $11\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.134
- 164 Chrysanthemum – c.1906 – Oil – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.130
- 165 Chrysanthemums – c.1906 – Oil – $17\frac{5}{16} \times 13$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 166 Flowers – c.1906 – Drawing – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 167 Flowers – c.1906 – Drawing – $23\frac{1}{4} \times 35\frac{1}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 168 Flowers – c.1906 – Chalk – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 27\frac{3}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 169 Flowers – c.1906 – Chalk – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 27\frac{3}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 170 Flowers – c.1906 – Drawing – $29\frac{1}{2} \times 39\frac{3}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 171 Anemones – c.1906 – Oil – $11\frac{7}{16} \times 8\frac{1}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijpers collection, Blaricum
- 172 Orchard with Haycock – c.1906 – Watercolor – $13\frac{3}{8} \times 23\frac{5}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 173 Study of Tree – c.1906 – Oil – $12\frac{3}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 174 Trees – c.1906 – Oil – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum p.214 – C.C.62
- 175 Landscape – study – c.1906/07 – Oil – $8\frac{1}{16} \times 13$ " – Mrs.T.Bruin-Reitsma collection, Heemstede C.C.47
- 176 Isolated Farmhouse – c.1906/07 – Watercolor – $17\frac{5}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.98
- 177 Chrysanthemum – c.1906/08 – Watercolor – $28\frac{7}{16} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.128

- 178 Chrysanthemum – c.1906/08 – Watercolor – $28\frac{9}{16} \times 15\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.129
- 179 Landscape near Oele (sketch) – Charcoal – $11\frac{5}{8} \times 12\frac{5}{8}''$ – A. P. v. d. Briel collection, De Meern C. C.48
- 180 Winter Landscape – c.1907 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 24''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from Mrs. P. R. Nieboer van Haasen) C. C.49
- 181 The River Amstel in the Evening – c.1907 – Oil – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{13}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.75
- 182 Woods near Oele – c.1907 – Drawing – $44 \times 26\frac{3}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.64
- 183 Evening Landscape with Groups of Trees – c.1907 – Oil – $30\frac{1}{2} \times 36\frac{3}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 184 Landscape with Trees – c.1907 – Oil – $39\frac{3}{8} \times 53\frac{15}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 185 Trees under Blue Sky – c.1907 – Oil – $17\frac{13}{16} \times 14\frac{3}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 186 Trees by Water – c.1907 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{8} \times 22\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 187 Dying Chrysanthemum (sketch) – c.1907 – Charcoal – $30\frac{11}{16} \times 18\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.135
- 188 Chrysanthemum – c.1907 – Watercolor – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 12\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 189 Chrysanthemum – c.1907 – Watercolor – $11\frac{1}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.137
- 190 Chrysanthemums – c.1907 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 191 Amaryllis – c.1907 – Charcoal and gouache – $9\frac{7}{8} \times 17\frac{5}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.157
- 192 Woods near Oele – 1907 – Oil – $50\frac{3}{8} \times 62\frac{3}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.71 – C. C.65
- 193 By the River – 1907 – Oil – Mrs. N. Hart Nibbrig-Hak collection, Blaricum C. C.74
- 194 Sheepfold in the Evening – 1907 – Watercolor – $28\frac{15}{16} \times 38\frac{9}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.217 – C. C.99
- 195 Isolated Farm – 1907 – Oil – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 28\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.100
- 196 Two Marigolds – 1907 – Watercolor and India ink – $9\frac{7}{16} \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.151
- 197 Red Dahlia – 1907 – Watercolor – $12 \times 9\frac{1}{16}''$ – Charmion v. Wiegand collection, New York C. C.152
- 198 Amaryllis – 1907 – Watercolor – Private collection, USA C. C.158
- 199 Dying Chrysanthemum – c.1907/08 – Oil – $33\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.234 – C. C.136
- 200 Two Marigolds – c.1907/08 – Watercolor – $8\frac{11}{16} \times 7\frac{1}{2}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.68 – C. C.150
- 201 Dying Sunflower – c.1907/08 – Oil – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.155
- 202 Flowering – c.1907–1910 – Charcoal – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.159
- 203 Flowering – c.1907–1910 – Charcoal – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 27\frac{3}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.160
- 204 Flowering – c.1907–1910 – Charcoal – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 27\frac{3}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.161

- 205 Beach near Domburg – c.1907–1910 – Oil – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 213
- 206 Landscape (house and tree) – before 1908 – Oil – $16 \times 9\frac{13}{16}$ " – Mrs. Knap collection, Amsterdam
- 207 Landscape in Moonlight – before 1908 – Oil – $27\frac{13}{16} \times 44\frac{1}{8}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from J. Gasschalk, The Hague) C. C. 50
- 208 Landscape – before 1908 – Oil – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 47\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 212 – C. C. 51
- 209 Landscape – before 1908 – Oil – Private collection, Sweden C. C. 52
- 210 Landscape near Oele – before 1908 – Oil – $40 \times 107\frac{1}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 212 – C. C. 53
- 211 Trees – before 1908 – Oil – $48\frac{1}{16} \times 253\frac{1}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 58
- 212 Trees – before 1908 – Oil – $16\frac{5}{16} \times 19\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 215 – C. C. 63
- 213 Trees by the River Gein – before 1908 – Watercolor – $247\frac{1}{16} \times 187\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 66
- 214 Farmhouse with Poultry Yard – before 1908 – Oil – $19\frac{1}{4} \times 263\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 218 – C. C. 101
- 215 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Chalk – $4\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 114
- 216 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Watercolor – $16\frac{5}{16} \times 29\frac{5}{16}$ " – Mrs. A. W. Rabbie-Vuyk collection C. C. 115
- 217 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Oil – $35\frac{1}{16} \times 45\frac{11}{16}$ " – J. P. Bak collection, The Hague C. C. 116
- 218 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Charcoal – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C. C. 117
- 219 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Watercolor – $19\frac{3}{16} \times 253\frac{1}{16}$ " – Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem C. C. 118
- 220 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Oil – $33\frac{1}{2} \times 393\frac{1}{8}$ " – E. Diamant collection, Laren C. C. 119
- 221 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Oil – $34\frac{3}{4} \times 42\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 213 – C. C. 120
- 222 Farm near Duivendrecht – before 1908 – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York p. 213 – C. C. 121
- 223 Farm – before 1908 – Watercolor – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 122
- 224 Self-Portrait – c.1908 – Charcoal – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 236 – C. C. 2
- 225 Zeeland Farmer – c.1908 – Oil – $263\frac{1}{4} \times 207\frac{1}{8}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) C. C. 15
- 226 Portrait of a Friend – c.1908 – $287\frac{1}{16} \times 203\frac{1}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C. 16
- 227 The Two Sisters – c.1908 – Oil – $29\frac{13}{16} \times 253\frac{1}{16}$ " C. C. 12
- 228 Young Girl – c.1908 – Oil – $207\frac{1}{8} \times 173\frac{1}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 230 – C. C. 13
- 229 Praying Child – c.1908 – Oil – $36\frac{5}{8} \times 235\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 14
- 230 Male and female figures (study) – c.1908 – Oil – $13 \times 12\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 231 Evening – c.1908 – Oil – $253\frac{1}{16} \times 291\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper, Blaricum
- 232 Fir – c.1908 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 133\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 233 View of Bridge with House and Farmers – c.1908 – Watercolor – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 234 Departure of Fishing Fleet (Zuidersee) – c.1908 – Watercolor – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 39\frac{3}{8}$ '' Private collection, Marseille C.C.127
- 235 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Drawing – $27\frac{1}{16} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 236 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Drawing – $16\frac{15}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 237 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Drawing – $25\frac{5}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 238 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Pencil – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.142
- 239 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Pencil – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.143
- 240 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Gouache – $10\frac{1}{16} \times 7\frac{11}{16}$ '' – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.140
- 241 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Watercolor – $11\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Gemeente Museum, The Hague C.C.141
- 242 Chrysanthemum – c.1908 – Watercolor – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{15}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 243 Rose – c.1908 – Watercolor – $10\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 244 Hayricks – c.1908 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.166
- 245 Seascape – c.1908 – $13\frac{3}{16} \times 16\frac{15}{16}$ '' – Mrs. M. Donk-Kaars Sypesteyn, Oosterbeek
- 246 Hayricks – 1908 – Oil – Museum of Modern Art, New York C.C.167
- 247 Dunes – 1908 – Pencil sketch – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ '' – Charmion v. Wiegand collection, New York p.89 – C.C.204
- 248 Church in Zeeland – 1908 – Oil – $24\frac{3}{8} \times 27\frac{3}{16}$ '' – Mr. and Mrs. Alex Lewyt, New York C.C.246
- 249 Chrysanthemum – 1908 – Pencil drawing – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.77 – C.C.144
- 250 Chrysanthemum – 1908 – Pencil drawing – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.78 – C.C.145
- 251 Chrysanthemum – 1908 – Pencil drawing – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.79 – C.C.146
- 252 Chrysanthemum – 1908 – Pencil drawing – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.147
- 253 Chrysanthemum – c.1908/9 – Oil – $26\frac{1}{16} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ '' – Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart collection C.C.138
- 254 Chrysanthemums – c.1908/10 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{8} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.242 – C.C.139
- 255 Portrait of a Girl – c.1909 – Oil – $19\frac{5}{16} \times 16\frac{3}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.17
- 256 Yellow Chrysanthemum – c.1909 – Watercolor – $26\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 257 Rose – c.1909 – Drawing – $9\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 258 Tiger Lily – c.1909 – Watercolor – $9\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 259 Rose in a Glass – c.1909 – Watercolor – $10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 260 Roses – c.1909 – Watercolor – $10\frac{5}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 261 Chrysanthemum – c.1909 – Watercolor – $13 \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 262 Chrysanthemum – c.1909 – Watercolor – $37 \times 10\frac{3}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 263 Mill near Blaricum in Moonlight – c.1909 – Oil – $40\frac{9}{16} \times 33\frac{1}{2}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.110
- 264 Hayrick – c.1909 – Oil – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 16\frac{15}{16}''$ – Mrs. Maria Johanna Ootmar collection, Kelowna, British Columbia p.231 – C.C.168
- 265 Dunes and Sea – c.1909 – Pencil drawing – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.89 – C.C.205
- 266 Dunes and Sea – c.1909 – Pencil sketch – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.207
- 267 Dunes and Sea – c.1909 – Pencil sketch – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.209
- 268 Dunes – c.1909 – Charcoal – $18\frac{3}{8} \times 24\frac{13}{16}''$ – Private collection, Marseille C.C.211
- 269 Dune – c.1909 – Oil – $13 \times 18\frac{1}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.217
- 270 Beach near Domburg – c.1909 – Oil – $15\frac{15}{16} \times 29\frac{15}{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 271 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1909 – Drawing – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) C.C.240
- 272 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1909 – Oil – $43\frac{1}{8} \times 29\frac{7}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.232 – C.C.241
- 273 Church Tower at Domburg – c.1909 – Drawing – $16\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.112 – C.C.250
- 274 Church Tower at Domburg – c.1909 – $44\frac{7}{8} \times 29\frac{7}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.75 – C.C.251
- 275 Mill near Domburg – 1909 – Oil – $25 \times 30\frac{1}{8}''$ – Private collection, Holland C.C.111
- 276 Dunes and Sea – 1909 – Pencil drawing – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.89 – C.C.206
- 277 Dunes – 1909 – Pencil – $4\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.215
- 278 Sea at Sunset – 1909 – Oil – $24\frac{5}{8} \times 29\frac{5}{16}''$ – A.P.v.d. Briel collection, De Meern C.C.220
- 279 Tree – c.1909/10 – Chalk drawing – $12\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{5}{16}''$ – M.J. Heybroek collection, Hilversum p.244 – C.C.170
- 280 Dune – c.1909/10 – Oil – $17\frac{15}{16} \times 26\frac{3}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.239 – C.C.210
- 281 Seascape (Zeeland) – c.1909/10 – Oil – $13\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{5}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.222
- 282 Tree – 1909/10 – Drawing – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 17\frac{5}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) C.C.169
- 283 The Red Tree – 1909/10 – Oil – $27\frac{7}{16} \times 39''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague Plate p.83 – p.244 – C.C.171
- 284 Tree – 1909/10 – Ink and watercolor – $29\frac{3}{8} \times 39\frac{3}{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague p.245 – C.C.172
- 285 Tree – 1909/10 – Oil – $12\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{9}{16}''$ – Mrs. Maria Johanna Ootmar collection, Kelowna, British Columbia C.C.173
- 286 The Blue Tree – 1909/10 – Oil – $21\frac{7}{8} \times 29\frac{7}{16}''$ – W. C. v. Dijk collection, De Bilt p.245 – C.C.174
- 287 Self-Portrait (sketch) – c.1910 – Drawing – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 288 Self-Portrait – c.1910 – Drawing – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 289 o, b) Self-Portrait – c.1910 – Pencil – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 3
Eucalyptus (back of a) – Charcoal – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 201
- 290 Portrait of a Woman – c.1910 – Oil – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 291 Portrait of a Woman – c.1910 – Charcoal – $29\frac{9}{16} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 18
- 292 Zeeland Landscape (study) – c.1910 – Oil – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 293 Mill near Domburg – c.1910 – Oil – $59\frac{1}{16} \times 33\frac{7}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 240 – C. C. 112
- 294 Chrysanthemum – c.1910 – Watercolor – Privately owned, New York C. C. 148
- 295 Chrysanthemum – c.1910 – Charcoal and watercolor – $24 \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ '' – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam
- 296 Rhododendron – c.1910 – Charcoal and pastel – $28\frac{3}{4} \times 38\frac{3}{8}$ '' – Mrs. T. Bruin-Reitsma collection, Heemstede C. C. 153
- 297 Rose – c.1910 – Pencil – $6\frac{11}{16} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C. 154
- 298 Rose – c.1910 – Watercolor – Mme Christian Zervos collection, Paris
- 299 Sunflower – c.1910 – Oil – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 12\frac{1}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 156
- 300 Calla Lily – c.1910 – Charcoal drawing – $17\frac{3}{16} \times 12\frac{1}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 162
- 301 Calla Lily – c.1910 – Oil – $18\frac{1}{8} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 241 – C. C. 163
- 302 Tree – c.1910 – Pencil drawing – $3\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{11}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C. 180
- 303 Trees – c.1910 – Pencil drawing – $3\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{11}{16}$ '' – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p. 91 – C. C. 181
- 304 Beach near Domburg – c.1910 – Oil – $12\frac{3}{4} \times 16\frac{3}{4}$ '' – P. Donk collection, Oosterbeek p. 238 – C. C. 208
- 305 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $13 \times 16\frac{15}{16}$ '' – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C. C. 212
- 306 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $51\frac{3}{16} \times 76\frac{15}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum Plate p. 85 – C. C. 214
- 307 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $25\frac{3}{4} \times 37\frac{13}{16}$ '' – Mrs. T. Bruin-Reitsma collection, Heemstede C. C. 215
- 308 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $55\frac{1}{2} \times 94\frac{1}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 238 – C. C. 216
- 309 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 218
- 310 Dune – c.1910 – Oil – $11\frac{1}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 239 – C. C. 219
- 311 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1910 – Drawing – $11\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 312 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1910 – Oil – $27\frac{15}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 233 – C. C. 242
- 313 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1910 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 14$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p. 234 – C. C. 243
- 314 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1910 – Oil – $15\frac{9}{16} \times 11\frac{13}{16}$ '' – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 244
- 315 Lighthouse at Westkapelle – c.1910 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{16}$ '' – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague Plate p. 87 – C. C. 245

- 316 Church at Domburg – c.1910 – Oil – $29\frac{7}{16} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.248
- 317 Church Tower at Domburg – c.1910 – Oil – $14\frac{3}{16} \times 14\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.249
- 318 Peasant Dwelling – c.1910 – $20\frac{11}{16} \times 26\frac{3}{16}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague
- 319 Calla Lilies – c.1910 – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.164
- 320 Eucalyptus – 1910 – Oil – $23\frac{5}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{16}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.202
- 321 Church Tower in Zoutelande, Walcheren – 1910 – Oil – $35\frac{1}{4} \times 24\frac{1}{4}$ " – M.J. Heybroek collection, Hilversum p.235 – C.C.247
- 322 Tree – 1910/11 – Chalk drawing – $22\frac{1}{4} \times 33\frac{1}{4}$ " – Mrs. M. Elout-Drabbe collection, Domburg p.91 – C.C.175
- 323 Self-Portrait – c.1911 – Charcoal drawing – $19\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{5}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.121 – C.C.5
- 324 a-c) Evolution (triptych) – c.1911 – Oil – $70\frac{7}{8} \times 33\frac{1}{8}$ ", $72\frac{7}{16} \times 34\frac{3}{4}$ ", $70\frac{7}{8} \times 33\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.237 – C.C.26 and 27
- 325 Windmill in the Sun – c.1911 – Oil – $44\frac{7}{8} \times 34\frac{1}{4}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.95 – C.C.113
- 326 Tree – c.1911 – Oil – $31\frac{7}{8} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.176
- 327 Trees (sketch) – c.1911 – Charcoal – $28\frac{3}{4} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.182
- 328 Tree (sketch) – c.1911 – Charcoal – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 35\frac{1}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.183
- 329 Trees – c.1911 – Charcoal drawing – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 32\frac{3}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.246 – C.C.184
- 330 Trees – c.1911 – Charcoal drawing – $6\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{15}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.185
- 331 Trees – c.1911 – $6\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{15}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.186
- 332 Tree (sketch) – c.1911 – Charcoal drawing – $7\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{15}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.187
- 333 Tree – c.1911 – Charcoal drawing – $4\frac{15}{16} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.188
- 334 Self-Portrait – 1911 – Charcoal – $11\frac{1}{16} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.4
- 335 The Gray Tree – 1911 – Oil – $30\frac{15}{16} \times 42\frac{3}{8}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.246 – C.C.177
- 336 Tree – 1911 – Charcoal drawing – $4\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.189
- 337 Composition in Gray – 1911/12 – $38\frac{5}{8} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 338 Portrait of Dr. R. van Eyck – c.1912 – India ink and charcoal – $20\frac{7}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$ " – Private collection, Marseille
- 339 Portrait of Woman – c.1912 – Oil – $21\frac{11}{16} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 340 Composition No.11 – c.1912 – Oil – $29\frac{1}{8} \times 21\frac{11}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.251 – C.C.19
- 341 Female Figure – c.1912 – Oil – $45\frac{5}{16} \times 34\frac{3}{8}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.250 – C.C.20
- 342 Nude – c.1912 – Oil – $55\frac{5}{16} \times 38\frac{5}{8}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.103 – C.C.28

- 343 Landscape – c.1912 – Oil – $24^{13}/_{16} \times 30^{3}/_{4}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.248 – C. C.55
- 344 Landscape with Trees – c.1912 – Oil – $47^{1}/_{2} \times 39^{3}/_{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.247 – C. C.67
- 345 Flowering Appletree – c.1912 – Oil – $30^{3}/_{4} \times 41^{3}/_{4}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague C. C.179
- 346 Appletree – c.1912 – Oil – $25^{5}/_{8} \times 29^{9}/_{16}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Goliery, The Hague p.252 – C. C.191
- 347 Tree – c.1912 – Oil – $36^{7}/_{16} \times 27^{9}/_{16}''$ – Charmion v. Wiegand, New York C. C.192
- 348 Composition No.1 (Trees) – c.1912 – Oil – $33^{11}/_{16} \times 29^{9}/_{16}''$ – J. Hudig L. Izn collection, Rotterdam C. C.193
- 349 Composition No.3 (Trees) – c.1912 – Oil – $37^{7}/_{16} \times 31^{1}/_{2}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.119 – C. C.194
- 350 Composition with Trees – c.1912 – Oil – $31^{15}/_{16} \times 24^{3}/_{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.92 – C. C.195
- 351 Composition with Trees – c.1912 – Oil – $38^{5}/_{8} \times 25^{5}/_{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.97 – C. C.198
- 352 Composition in Gray-Blue – c.1912 – Oil – $38^{5}/_{8} \times 25^{5}/_{8}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum Plate p.99 – C. C.197
- 353 Oval Composition (sketch) – c.1912 – Charcoal – $33^{1}/_{2} \times 27^{9}/_{16}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.199
- 354 Eucalyptus – c.1912 – Oil – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.203
- 355 Roofs – c.1912 – Chalk – $10^{1}/_{4} \times 13^{3}/_{4}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.261
- 356 Roofs – c.1912 – Chalk – $10^{1}/_{4} \times 13^{3}/_{4}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.262
- 357 Façade – c.1912 – Pencil – $4^{1}/_{8} \times 6^{11}/_{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York
- 358 Façade – c.1912 – Pencil – $4^{1}/_{8} \times 6^{11}/_{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.263
- 359 Demolished Building, Paris – c.1912 – Chalk – $16^{11}/_{16} \times 3^{15}/_{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.264
- 360 Scaffolding – c.1912 – Pencil – $9^{1}/_{8} \times 6^{3}/_{8}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.276
- 361 Scaffolding – c.1912 – Charcoal drawing – $60^{1}/_{8} \times 44^{3}/_{8}''$ – Peggy Guggenheim collection, Venice C. C.277
- 362 Composition – c.1912 – Oil – $11^{1}/_{16} \times 11^{5}/_{8}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C.441
- 363 Self-Portrait – 1912 – Charcoal – $22^{1}/_{16} \times 17^{3}/_{4}''$ – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C.6
- 364 Nude – 1912 – Charcoal drawing – $36^{3}/_{8} \times 62^{1}/_{4}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.121 – C. C.29
- 365 Still Life with Gingerpot I – 1912 – $25^{13}/_{16} \times 29^{9}/_{16}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) p.249 – C. C.33
- 366 Still Life with Gingerpot II – 1912 – Oil – $36 \times 47^{1}/_{4}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.101 – C. C.34
- 367 Flowering Trees – 1912 – Oil – $25^{5}/_{8} \times 29^{1}/_{2}''$ – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague Plate p.115 C. C.178
- 368 Tree – 1912 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C. C.196
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- 370 Oval Composition (Tree) – 1912/13 – Charcoal drawing – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C. C.190

- 371 Composition in Brown and Gray – c.1913 – Oil – $33\frac{7}{8} \times 29\frac{15}{16}$ " – Museum of Modern Art, New York p.257 – C.C.268
- 372 Composition No.9 (Façade) – c.1913 – Oil – $37\frac{7}{16} \times 26\frac{3}{8}$ " – John L.Senior collection, New York p.253 – C.C.279
- 373 Oval Composition (Trees) – 1913 – Oil – $36\frac{5}{8} \times 30\frac{3}{4}$ " – Dr.H.P. Bremmer collection, The Hague Plate p.131 – C.C.200
- 374 Composition No.7 – 1913 – Oil – $40\frac{3}{16} \times 44\frac{1}{8}$ " – Salomon R.Guggenheim Museum, New York p.254 – C.C.265
- 375 Composition (Tableau I) – 1913 – Oil – $37\frac{13}{16} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.256 – C.C.266
- 376 Façade in Brown and Gray – 1913 – Oil – $25 \times 35\frac{13}{16}$ " – Edgar Kaufmann jr., collection, New York C.C.267
- 377 Composition in Blue, Gray and Pink – 1913 – Oil – $34\frac{5}{8} \times 45\frac{5}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.255 – C.C.270
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- 379 Oval Composition (sketch) – 1913 – Charcoal drawing – $41\frac{1}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.282
- 380 Oval Composition with Bright Colors – 1913 – Oil – $42\frac{1}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{8}$ " – Museum of Modern Art, New York Plate p.133 – C.C.283
- 381 Composition No.2 with Lines and Colors – 1913 – $34\frac{5}{8} \times 45\frac{5}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo
- 382 Seascape – 1913/14 – Gouache and India ink – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 24$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.227
- 383 The Sea – c.1914 – Pencil drawing – $3\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{11}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.105 – C.C.224
- 384 The Sea – c.1914 – Pencil drawing – $4\frac{5}{16} \times 6\frac{5}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.225
- 385 The Sea – c.1914 – Charcoal drawing – $18\frac{7}{8} \times 24$ " – Théodore Bally collection, Montreux p.124 – C.C.228
- 386 Pier and Ocean – c.1914 – Pencil drawing – $4\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{5}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York
- 387 Church at Domburg – c.1914 – India ink – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.254
- 388 Church Façade (?) – 1914? – Charcoal drawing – $26\frac{5}{8} \times 28\frac{3}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.259
- 389 Untitled – c.1914 – Charcoal drawing – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.260
- 390 Scaffolding – c.1914 – Charcoal drawing – $51\frac{1}{4} \times 35\frac{7}{16}$ " – Charmion v.Wiegand collection, New York C.C.280
- 391 Seascape – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $30\frac{1}{8}$ wide – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.226
- 392 The Sea – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $37\frac{7}{16} \times 50\frac{7}{16}$ " – Peggy Guggenheim collection, Venice p.125 – C.C.229
- 393 Ocean – 1914 – Charcoal drawing p.125 – C.C.230
- 394 Pier and Ocean – 1914 – Charcoal and India ink – $21\frac{13}{16} \times 26$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.122 – C.C.234
- 395 Pier and Ocean – 1914 – India ink and tempera – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Barton Tremaine collection, Meriden, Conn. C.C.235
- 396 Pier and Ocean – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.236
- 397 Pier and Ocean – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $19\frac{3}{4} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum p.123 – C.C.237

- 398 Pier and Ocean – 1914 – Colored crayon and gouache – $34\frac{1}{4} \times 44\frac{1}{8}$ " – Museum of Modern Art (Guggenheim Fund), New York p.123 – C. C. 238
- 399 Church at Domburg – 1914 – Charcoal – $30\frac{3}{4} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 256
- 400 Church Façade – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{3}{4}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C. 252
- 401 Church Façade – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $38\frac{3}{8} \times 24\frac{3}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.108 – C. C. 253
- 402 Church Façade – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.107 – C. C. 255
- 403 Church Façade – 1914 – Charcoal drawing C. C. 257
- 404 Church Façade – 1914 – Charcoal drawing – Lucie Glarner collection, New York p.106 – C. C. 258
- 405 Composition in Gray and Yellow – 1914 – Oil – $24\frac{1}{4} \times 30\frac{1}{8}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam p.258 – C. C. 269
- 406 Façade No. 5 – 1914 – Oil – $22\frac{1}{16} \times 33\frac{1}{16}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C. C. 272
- 407 Composition No. 6 – 1914 – Oil – $34\frac{5}{8} \times 24$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum Plate p.135 – C. C. 273
- 408 Composition No. 7 (Façade) – 1914 – Oil – $47\frac{1}{4} \times 39\frac{3}{8}$ " – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague Plate p.139 – C. C. 271
- 409 Composition No. 8 – 1914 – Oil – $36\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ " – Museum of Modern Art (Guggenheim Fund), New York p.259 – C. C. 274
- 410 Oval Composition (Tableau III) – 1914 – Oil – $55\frac{5}{16} \times 40\frac{1}{8}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam (on loan from S. B. Slijper, P. Alma, and J. Steylinga) Plate p.153 – C. C. 275
- 411 Composition No. 14 with Gray and Brown – 1914 – $37 \times 33\frac{1}{2}$ " – Municipal Museum, Eindhoven
- 412 Oval Composition – 1914 – Oil – $44\frac{1}{4} \times 33\frac{1}{4}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) C. C. 281
- 413 Composition with Color Planes – 1914 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C. C. 284
- 414 Oval Composition – 1914/15 – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 42\frac{9}{16}$ " – Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 415 Pier and Ocean – 1915 – Oil – $33\frac{1}{2} \times 42\frac{9}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.124 – C. C. 239
- 416 Mill at Blaricum – 1916? – Charcoal – $41\frac{3}{8} \times 35\frac{1}{4}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 417 Mill at Blaricum – 1916? – Charcoal – $41\frac{1}{8} \times 32\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 418 Mill at Blaricum – c.1916 – Drawing – $40\frac{13}{16} \times 32\frac{5}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 419 Mill at Blaricum – c.1916 – Drawing – $41\frac{3}{8} \times 35\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 420 Calla Lily – c.1916 – Drawing – $27\frac{3}{4} \times 20\frac{7}{8}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum
- 421 Composition – c.1916 – Oil and pencil – $49 \times 29\frac{9}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C. C. 231
- 422 Mill – 1916 – $39\frac{3}{8} \times 37\frac{1}{4}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam
- 423 Calla Lily – 1916 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C. C. 165
- 424 Composition – 1916 – Oil – $47\frac{1}{4} \times 29\frac{1}{2}$ " – Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York p.260 – C. C. 232

- 425 The Banks of the Seine – 1916–20 – Oil – $23\frac{5}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " – Dr. A. Peters, Cologne C.C.54
- 426 Composition with Lines – 1917 – Oil – $42\frac{9}{16} \times 42\frac{9}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo C.C.233
- 427 Composition with Color Planes B – 1917 – Oil – $17\frac{5}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo C.C.285
- 428 Composition No.3 with Color Planes – 1917 – Oil – $18\frac{15}{16} \times 24$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague C.C.286
- 429 Composition with Color Planes – 1917 – Oil – $18\frac{15}{16} \times 24\frac{1}{4}$ " – Museum Boymans, Rotterdam C.C.287
- 430 Composition No.5 with Color Planes – 1917 – Oil – $19\frac{5}{16} \times 23\frac{13}{16}$ " – J.D. Waller, The Hague C.C.288
- 431 Composition with Color Planes on White Ground – 1917 – Gouache – $18\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{3}{8}$ " – B.H.Friedman collection, New York C.C.289
- 432 Composition with Color Planes on White Ground – 1917 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 17\frac{5}{16}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo C.C.290
- 433 Composition in Blue B – 1917 – Oil – $24 \times 18\frac{5}{8}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.264 – C.C.291
- 434 Self-Portrait (sketch) – 1918 – Charcoal – $47\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{13}{16}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.7
- 435 Self-Portrait – 1918 – Oil – $34\frac{11}{16} \times 28\frac{3}{4}$ " – S.B.Slijper collection, Blaricum Plate p.21 – C.C.8
- 436 Chrysanthemums in a Glass – 1918 – Watercolor – $10\frac{7}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ " Mrs.v.Loos, Amsterdam
- 437 Composition with Gray and Light Brown with Black Lines – 1918 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$ " C.C.294
- 438 Lozenge with Gray Lines – 1918 – Oil – Diagonal – $47\frac{5}{8}$ " – Private collection, Holland C.C.297
- 439 Composition in Gray – 1919? – Oil – $37\frac{5}{8} \times 24$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.265 – C.C.295
- 440 Composition in Gray and Black – 1919? – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
- 441 Composition: Color Planes with Gray Contours – 1919? – Oil – $19\frac{5}{16} \times 23\frac{13}{16}$ " – Max Bill collection, Zurich and Ulm C.C.301
- 442 Composition: Checkerboard, Bright Colors – 1919 – Oil – $33\frac{1}{8} \times 41\frac{3}{4}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) Plate p.157 – C.C.292
- 443 Composition: Checkerboard, Dark Colors – 1919 – Oil – $33\frac{1}{8} \times 40\frac{7}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum C.C.293
- 444 Composition: Bright Color Planes with Gray Contours – Oil – $19\frac{5}{16} \times 19\frac{5}{16}$ " Marguerite Hagenbach collection, Basel Plate p.155 – C.C.296
- 445 Lozenge (with gray lines) – 1919 – Oil – $33\frac{1}{8} \times 33\frac{1}{8}$ " – Philadelphia Museum of Art (Arensberg collection) p.266 – C.C.298
- 446 Composition: Bright Color Planes with Gray Lines – 1919 – Oil – Diagonal $33\frac{1}{8}$ " – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo C.C.299
- 447 Lozenge – 1919 – Oil – $19\frac{5}{16} \times 19\frac{5}{16}$ " (Diagonal $26\frac{3}{8}$ ") – Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo p.267 – C.C.300
- 448 Composition – 1919 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{8}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York p.268 – C.C.302
- 449 Composition in Gray, Red, Yellow and Blue – 1920 – Oil – $39\frac{9}{16} \times 39\frac{3}{4}$ " – Museum of Modern Art, New York (on loan from Harry Holtzman) C.C.303
- 450 Composition – 1920 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " – Dr. Max H. Welti, Zurich C.C.304

- 451 Composition with Red, Blue, Black, and Yellow-Green – 1920 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " Museum of Modern Art, New York C.C.305
- 452 Composition with Red, Blue and Green – 1920 – Oil – $26\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{7}{16}$ " – J. J. P. Oud, Wassenaar C.C.306
- 453 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1920 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{5}{8}$ " – Mrs. v. v. Muijzenberg-Willemsse, Amsterdam C.C.310
- 454 Composition – 1921 – Oil – $34\frac{7}{8} \times 28\frac{9}{16}$ " – Mrs. K. Legat, The Hague C.C.309
- 455 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1921 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague Plate p.167 – C.C.311
- 456 Composition – 1921 – Oil – $24\frac{1}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.269 – C.C.312
- 457 Composition – 1921 – Oil – $39\frac{3}{4} \times 39$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos collection, New York C.C.313
- 458 Composition – 1921 – Oil – $19\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{15}{16}$ " – Kunstmuseum Basel (Emanuel Hoffman Fund) p.271 – C.C.314
- 459 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1921 – Oil – $40\frac{9}{16} \times 39\frac{9}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum p.270 – C.C.315
- 460 Composition – 1921 – Oil – $39\frac{3}{4} \times 39$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos collection, New York C.C.316
- 461 Composition with Large Blue Plane, and Red and Yellow Rectangles – 1921 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.317
- 462 Composition in Gray, Blue, Yellow and Red – 1921 – Oil – $9\frac{7}{8} \times 15\frac{15}{16}$ " C.C.318
- 463 Tableau I – 1921 – Oil – $38 \times 23\frac{13}{16}$ " – Dr. Oskar Muller-Widman, Basel Plate p.165 – C.C.319
- 464 Composition with Yellow and Blue – 1921 – Oil – $15\frac{9}{16} \times 13\frac{13}{16}$ " – Gemeente Museum, The Hague (on loan from S. B. Slijper) C.C.321
- 465 Composition in a Square – 1921 – Oil – John L. Senior Jr., New York C.C.400
- 466 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1921 – Oil – $18\frac{14}{16} \times 18\frac{14}{16}$ " – Rothschild collection, Kitchawan, New York
- 467 Tableau No. 1 – 1921/1925 – Oil – $29\frac{9}{16} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – M. Moser-Schindler collection, Zurich C.C.307
- 468 Tableau No. II – 1921/25 – Oil – $29\frac{9}{16} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ " – Max Bill collection, Zurich and Ulm Plate p.161 – C.C.308
- 469 Composition – c. 1922 – Oil – $31\frac{2}{16} \times 9\frac{15}{16}$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Israel Rosen, Baltimore C.C.320
- 470 Composition – c. 1922 C.C.328
- 471 Composition in a Square – 1922 – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.322
- 472 Composition – 1922 – Oil – Rothschild collection, Kitchawan, New York Plate p.169 – C.C.323
- 473 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1922 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 20\frac{11}{16}$ " – Til Brugman collection, Reeuwijk C.C.324
- 474 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1922 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – J. J. P. Oud collection, Wassenaar C.C.325
- 475 Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow – 1922 – Oil – $16\frac{9}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam C.C.326
- 476 Composition – 1922 – Oil – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.327
- 477 Composition – c. 1922 – Watercolor – $25\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – S. B. Slijper collection, Blaricum

- 478 Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue – c. 1925 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.401
- 479 Composition in White, Black, Red and Blue – 1925 – Oil C.C.329
- 480 Composition – 1925 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{8} \times 12\frac{3}{16}$ '' – Museum of Modern Art, New York (Gift by Philip C. Johnson) p.272 – C.C.338
- 481 Composition in a Square – 1925 – Oil – E. H. E. L. Cabos, Utrecht C.C.402
- 482 Composition No. 1 with Blue and Yellow – 1925 – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ '' – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.403
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- 485 Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1926 – Oil – $40\frac{3}{16} \times 40\frac{3}{16}$ '' – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.404
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- 488 Stage Set I for L'Ephémère est éternel – 1926 – Gouache – $13\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ '' – p.274 – C.C.437
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- 491 Composition – c. 1927 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.330
- 492 Composition – c. 1927 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.363
- 493 Composition – 1927 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.332
- 494 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ '' – M. J. I. de Jonge van Ellemeet, Arnheim C.C.333
- 495 Composition III with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $15 \times 14\frac{9}{16}$ '' – E. Elenbaas, Rotterdam C.C.334
- 496 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{8}$ '' – J. J. P. Oud, Wassenaar C.C.335
- 497 Composition with Black, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $28\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ '' – Dr. Giedion-Welcker, Zurich
- 498 Composition with Black and Red – 1927 – Oil – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.339
- 499 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $24\frac{1}{16} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ '' – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam p.277 – C.C.364
- 500 Composition – 1927 – Oil – $15 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ '' – Werner M. Moser-Schindler collection, Zurich C.C.365
- 501 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1927 – Oil – $15 \times 13\frac{1}{4}$ '' – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York p.278 – C.C.366
- 502 Fox Trot A – 1927 – Oil – Diagonal $43\frac{3}{16}$ '' – Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn. p.275 – C.C.407
- 503 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1928? – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ '' – Martin Stam, Amsterdam C.C.340
- 504 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1928 – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.336
- 505 Large Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow – 1928 – Oil – $48\frac{1}{16} \times 31\frac{3}{16}$ '' – John L. Senior collection, New York p.276 – C.C.367
- 506 Tableau-Poème (with Michel Seuphor) – 1928 – Gouache – $25\frac{3}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ '' – Michel Seuphor collection, Paris Plate p.195 – C.C.440

- 507 Fox Trot B – 1929 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{16} \times 17\frac{3}{16}$ " – Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (Collection Société Anonyme) p.279 – C.C.337
- 508 Composition II with Red, Blue and Yellow – 1929 – Oil – $17\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ " – National Museum, Belgrade C.C.341
- 509 Composition in a Square – 1929 – Oil – Yale University Art Gallery (Collection Société Anonyme) New Haven C.C.342
- 510 Composition – 1929 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ " – Marguerite Hagenbach collection, Basel C.C.343
- 511 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1929 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ " – Ch. J. F. Karsten, Amsterdam C.C.344
- 512 Composition with Yellow and Blue – 1929 – $20\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ " – Museum Boymans, Rotterdam C.C.345
- 513 Composition III – 1929 – Oil – $19\frac{7}{8} \times 19\frac{7}{8}$ " – Theodore Bally collection, Montreux p.280 – C.C.346
- 514 Composition II with Yellow and Blue – 1930 – Oil – $19\frac{7}{8} \times 19\frac{7}{8}$ " – Dr. S. Giedion Welcker collection, Zurich C.C.347
- 515 Composition with Yellow Spot – 1930 – Oil – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 18\frac{5}{16}$ " – Jan Tschichold, Basel p.281 – C.C.348
- 516 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1930 – Oil – $18\frac{5}{16} \times 18\frac{5}{16}$ " – Alfred Roth collection, Zurich p.349 – C.C.349
- 517 Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow – 1930 – Oil – $20\frac{1}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{16}$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos collection, New York Plate p.173 – C.C.350
- 518 Composition – 1930 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.351
- 519 Composition I – 1930 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Dr. E. Friedrich-Zetzler, Zurich C.C.352
- 520 Composition No. 1 with Black Lines – 1930 – Oil – $16\frac{2}{16} \times 12\frac{13}{16}$ " – John L. Senior Jr. collection, New York C.C.359
- 521 Composition No. 2 with Black Lines – 1930 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{8}$ " – Municipal Museum, Eindhoven C.C.360
- 522 Composition with Blue, Red and Yellow – 1930 – Oil – $27\frac{13}{16} \times 20\frac{9}{16}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
- 523 Composition I-A – 1930 – Oil – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 27\frac{9}{16}$ " – Hilla Rebay collection, USA C.C.408
- 524 Composition – 1931 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York p.283 – C.C.353
- 525 Composition with Red, Black and White – 1931 – Oil – $31\frac{14}{16} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ " – Charmion v. Wiegand collection, New York p.285 – C.C.361
- 526 Composition with Two Lines – 1931 – Oil – Diagonal – $44\frac{7}{8}$ " – Municipal Museum, Amsterdam (on loan from municipality of Hilversum) p.287 C.C.409
- 527 Composition A – 1932 – Oil – $21\frac{11}{16} \times 21\frac{11}{16}$ " – Dr. E. Friedrich-Zetzler, Zurich p.285 – C.C.354
- 528 Composition D with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1932 – Oil – $16\frac{9}{16} \times 15\frac{9}{16}$ " – Max Bill collection, Zurich and Ulm p.284 – C.C.355
- 529 Composition with Blue and Yellow – 1932 – Oil – Philadelphia Museum of Art (Gallatin Collection) C.C.356
- 530 Composition B with Gray and Yellow – 1932 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Muller-Widman collection, Basel p.286 – C.C.368
- 531 Composition – 1932/36 C.C.379
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- 533 Composition with Colored Square – c. 1933 – Oil – Mrs. Gilbert Chapman, Chicago Art Institute C.C.375

- 534 Composition with Yellow and Blue – 1933 – Oil – $16\frac{1}{8} \times 13''$ – B. Merckelboch, Amsterdam C.C.357
- 535 Composition with Blue and Red – 1933 – Oil – $15\frac{3}{4} \times 13''$ – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York C.C.358
- 536 Composition with Yellow and Blue – 1933 – Oil – $16\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{16}''$ – Dr. Oskar Muller-Widman, Basel p.289 – C.C.369
- 537 Composition with Yellow Lines – 1933 – Oil – Diagonal – $52\frac{3}{8}''$ – Gemeente Museum, The Hague C.C.410
- 538 Composition with Blue – 1935 – Oil – $27\frac{15}{16} \times 27\frac{3}{16}''$ – Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lewis Winston, Birmingham, Michigan p.290
- 539 Composition with Red and Blue – 1935 – Oil – $21\frac{11}{16} \times 21\frac{11}{16}''$ – Basil Gray collection C.C.370
- 540 Composition – 1935 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.371
- 541 Composition B with Red – 1935 – Oil – $36\frac{1}{16} \times 28\frac{3}{16}''$ – Miss Helen Sutherland collection C.C.376
- 542 Composition – 1935 – Oil C.C.380
- 543 Composition – 1935/42 – Oil – $40\frac{3}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{16}''$ – Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Meriden, Conn. C.C.386
- 544 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1935/42 – Oil – $38\frac{9}{16} \times 20\frac{1}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.296 – C.C.387
- 545 Rhythms and Black Lines – 1935/42 – Oil – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 28\frac{7}{16}''$ – Henry Clifford collection, Radnor, Pa. C.C.396
- 546 Composition – c. 1935/42 – Oil C.C.413
- 547 Composition with Red – 1936 – Oil – $24\frac{13}{16} \times 15\frac{15}{16}''$ – Collection J. L. and Sadie Martin C.C.372
- 548 Composition II with Blue and Yellow – 1936 – Oil – $17\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{16}''$ – Kunstmuseum Basel (Emanuel Hoffman Fund) C.C.373
- 549 Composition with Red and Black – 1936 – Oil – $23\frac{1}{4} \times 22\frac{1}{4}''$ – Sidney Janis Gallery, New York Plate p.179 – C.C.377
- 550 Composition with Blue and Yellow – 1936 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.381
- 551 Composition – 1936 – Oil – $28\frac{3}{8} \times 26\frac{3}{8}''$ – Philadelphia Museum of Art (Arensberg collection) p.291 – C.C.382
- 552 Vertical Composition with Blue and White – 1936 – Oil – $47\frac{5}{8} \times 23\frac{1}{4}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.385
- 553 Composition with Red and Black – 1936 – Oil – $40\frac{3}{16} \times 40\frac{15}{16}''$ – Museum of Modern Art, New York C.C.388
- 554 Composition with Red and Blue – 1936 – $38\frac{9}{16} \times 33\frac{1}{2}''$ – Felix Witzinger collection, Indianapolis p.292 – C.C.389
- 555 Composition II with Blue – 1936/42 – Oil – $24 \times 24''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.397
- 556 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1936/43 – Oil – $23\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{11}{16}''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.412
- 557 Composition with Yellow (unfinished) – 1936/44 – Oil – $22\frac{1}{16} \times 21\frac{1}{4}''$ – and charcoal – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.426
- 558 Composition with Red and Black – 1937 – Oil C.C.383
- 559 Composition with Red and Yellow – 1937 – Oil – $16\frac{15}{16} \times 13''$ – Philadelphia Museum of Art (Gallatin collection) C.C.390
- 560 Composition with Blue and Yellow – 1937 – Oil – $17\frac{5}{8} \times 13''$ C.C.391
- 561 Composition – 1937 – Oil C.C.392
- 562 Composition with Yellow, Blue and White – 1937 – Oil – $22\frac{7}{16} \times 21\frac{11}{16}''$ C.C.393
- 563 Composition No. 2 with Red and Blue – 1937 – $29\frac{9}{16} \times 23\frac{13}{16}''$ – Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth collection, London C.C.394

- 564 Composition with Blue – 1937 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{2}$ " – Marcus Brumwell collection, London p.293 – C.C.395
- 565 Composition No. 7 – 1937/42 – Oil C.C.414
- 566 Composition with Blue (unfinished) – c. 1938 – Oil – $19\frac{11}{16} \times 23\frac{5}{8}$ " – G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar Gallery, The Hague C.C.428
- 567 Composition – 1938 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.378
- 568 Composition – 1938 – $24 \times 19\frac{11}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.429
- 569 Composition with Yellow and Red – 1938/43 – Oil – $31\frac{3}{16} \times 24\frac{2}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.384
- 570 Place de la Concorde – 1938/43 – Oil – $36\frac{6}{16} \times 36\frac{5}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.298 – C.C.419
- 571 Composition with Red (unfinished) – 1938/44 – Oil and charcoal – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 25$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.427
- 572 Composition (unfinished) – 1938/44 – Charcoal – $27\frac{9}{16} \times 8\frac{11}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.430
- 573 Composition with Red – c. 1939 – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.398
- 574 Composition with Red – 1939 – Oil – $40\frac{3}{16} \times 40\frac{15}{16}$ " – Peggy Guggenheim collection, Venice C.C.399
- 575 Composition with Red and Blue – 1939/41 – Oil – $16\frac{15}{16} \times 13$ " – Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos collection, New York
- 576 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1939/42 – Oil – $28\frac{3}{8} \times 27\frac{3}{16}$ " – Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart, New York p.294 – C.C.415
- 577 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue – 1939/42 – Oil – $31\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{3}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.416
- 578 Composition in Black, White, Yellow and Red – 1939/42 – Oil – $31\frac{5}{16} \times 28\frac{15}{16}$ " C.C.417
- 579 Trafalgar Square – 1939/43 – Oil – $57\frac{1}{16} \times 46\frac{7}{8}$ " – John L. Senior, Jr. collection, New York p.295 – C.C.418
- 580 Collage (sketch) – 1939/44 – Gouache and charcoal – $11\frac{1}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.431
- 581 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (unfinished) – 1939/44 – Oil and charcoal – $27\frac{15}{16} \times 27\frac{15}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.432
- 582 Composition (unfinished) – 1939/44 – $28\frac{3}{4} \times 27$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.433
- 583 Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (unfinished) – 1939/44 – Oil and charcoal – $28\frac{3}{4} \times 28\frac{3}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York Plate p.193 – C.C.434
- 584 New York – 1941/42 – Oil – $37 \times 36\frac{1}{4}$ " – Privately owned, New York C.C.420
- 585 New York City No. 3 (unfinished) – c. 1942 – Oil and strips of paper – $44\frac{11}{16} \times 38\frac{3}{8}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.299 – C.C.436
- 586 Self-Portrait – 1942 – India ink – 26×19 " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.9
- 587 New York City – 1942 – Oil – $47\frac{4}{16} \times 56\frac{11}{16}$ " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York Plate p.183 – C.C.421
- 588 New York City No. 2 (unfinished) – 1942 – Strips of paper on canvas – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.435
- 589 Broadway Boogie-Woogie (study) – 1942 – 50×50 " – Harry Holtzman collection, New York C.C.422

- 590 Broadway Boogie-Woogie – 1942/43 – Oil – $50 \times 50''$ – Museum of Modern Art, New York Plate p.185 – C.C.423
- 591 Victory Boogie-Woogie (study) – c. 1943 – Pencil drawing – Diagonal $18\frac{1}{2} \times 16''$ – Harry Holtzman collection, New York p.128 – C.C.424
- 592 Victory Boogie-Woogie – 1943/44 – Oil – $49\frac{5}{8} \times 49\frac{5}{8}''$ – Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Meriden, Conn. Plate p.191 – C.C.425
- 593 Composition in a Square with Red Corner – 1943 – Oil – James Johnson Sweeney collection, New York p.297 – C.C.411

Biographical Summary

- 1872 March 7. Birth at Amersfoort.
- 1880 May. The whole family leaves for Winterswijk.
- 1889 Obtains diploma as teacher of drawing in elementary schools.
- 1892 Obtains diploma as teacher of drawing in secondary schools. In November enters the Amsterdam Academy where he is in regular attendance for five years.
- 1901 Short trip to Spain with Simon Maris.
- 1903 First visit to the Dutch Brabant.
- 1904 January. Leaves for Uden (Brabant).
- 1905 February. Return to Amsterdam.
- 1907 Spends summer with the painter Hulshoff at Oele.
- 1908 First summer at Domburg, on the Isle of Walcheren. Friendship with Jean Toorop. Beginning of the so-called "Zeeland period."
- 1909 January. Sensational exhibition with Cornelis Spoor and Jan Sluyters at the Municipal Museum, Amsterdam.
- 1910 May. Exhibits with "Luminists" at the Sint Lucas Gilde, Amsterdam.
- 1911 Becomes member – with Sluyters, Toorop, and Kickert – of board of directors of the Circle of Modern Art.
End of December. Leaves for Paris, where Conrad Kickert lends him his studio at 26 Rue du Départ.
- 1912 Is greatly influenced by Cubist painting.
- 1913 Exhibits with the Independents. First abstract works.
- 1914 July. Visits Holland, where, because of the sudden outbreak of the war, he is forced to remain for four years. Visits Amsterdam, Domburg, Laren, etc. His "sea" series, his first large drawings in horizontal and vertical lines.
- 1915 Meets Van Doesburg.
- 1916 Meets Van der Leek.

- 1917 October. Publication of first issue *De Stijl*.
- 1919 February. Return to Paris. Takes first train made available on the Amsterdam-Paris Line.
- 1920 Publishes *Neo-Plasticism* under imprint of Léonce Rosenberg.
- 1923 November. Exhibition of *De Stijl* group at Léonce Rosenberg's.
- 1925 Publication of *Neue Gestaltung* by Bauhaus, Weimar.
- 1926 Thanks to Miss Dreier, takes part for first time in a big exhibition in America.
- 1930 Exhibition in Paris of the Circle and Square group of which he is one of the most important members.
- 1936 January. Leaves Rue du Départ, and takes studio on Boulevard Raspail.
- 1938 September. Departure for London.
- 1940 October 3. Arrival in New York.
- 1942 January-February. One-man show at the Dudensing Gallery in New York. (This is the first and only one-man show during his life.)
- 1943 March-April. Second exhibition at Dudensing.
- 1944 February 1. Dies of pneumonia at Murray Hill Hospital, New York.

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III. Full-size Reproductions in Color

- 1 Lithograph done at the Bauhaus (Weimar) of *Tableau I-1921*, Muller-Widmann collection, Basel.
- 2 *Canvas 1931*, Bartos collection, New York. Esther Gentle Reproductions, New York, 1951. Same dimensions as the original ($20\frac{1}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{8}$ ").
- 3 *Picture-Poem* of 1928, with text by Michel Seuphor. Esther Gentle Reproductions, New York, 1951. Reproduction made in Paris. Same dimensions as the original ($25\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{5}{8}$ ").
- 4 *Trafalgar Square*, $20\frac{7}{8} \times 18\frac{5}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1951. Letterpress. Original collection J. L. Senior, jr., New York.
- 5 Serigraph of Arcay from the 1921 *Canvas with a Gray Background*, collection Mme. Petro van Doesburg, Paris. In "Maîtres de l'art abstrait," published by the review *Art d'Aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1953. Original $19\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{5}{8}$ ", reproduction $12\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{1}{4}$ ".
- 6 *Composition in Blue, Gray and Pink*, 1913, Kröller-Müller Museum. Original $34\frac{5}{8} \times 45\frac{1}{4}$ ", reproduction $15 \times 19\frac{5}{8}$ ". Published by Kröller-Müller Museum, 1954.

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